

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

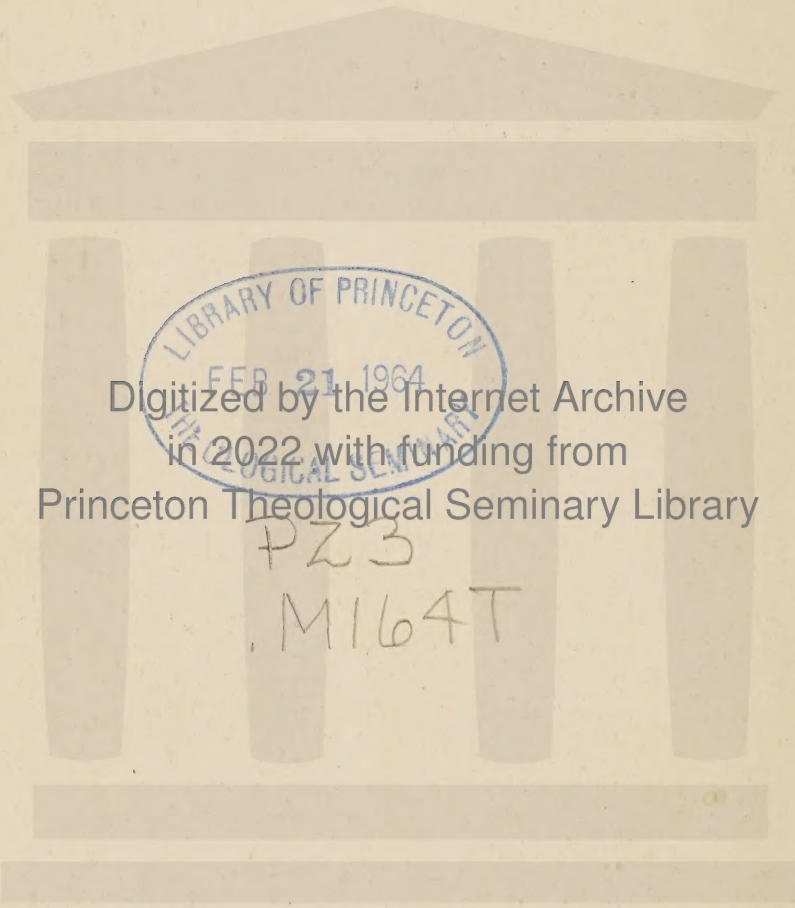
HENRY MACMAHON AND
JEANIE MACPHERSON



The young Hebrew girls were obliged to carry staggering loads of bricks



The revellers in the Golden Calf orgies.

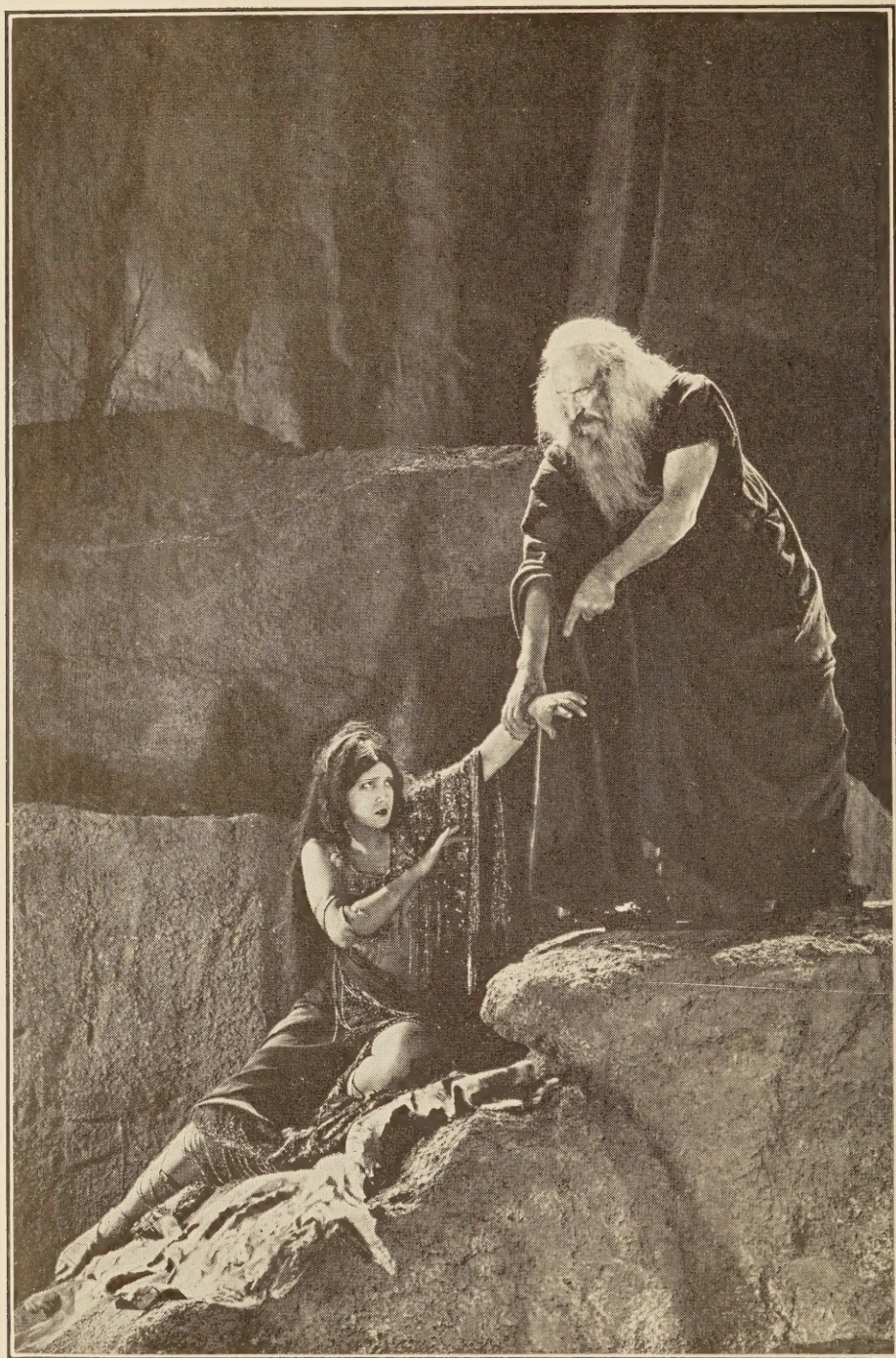


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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



A Paramount Picture

The Ten Commandments.

MOSES REBUKES HIS SISTER MIRIAM.

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A NOVEL

✓ BY
HENRY MACMAHON

FROM
JEANIE MACPHERSON'S STORY
PRODUCED BY CECIL B. DE MILLE

As the Celebrated Paramount Picture
"THE TEN COMMANDMENTS"

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES FROM
THE PHOTOPLAY



NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

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FOREWORD

THOSE who have attended the picture presentation or followed the remarkable vogue of Mr. Cecil B. De Mille's photodramatic spectacle of "The Ten Commandments," will find their pleasure redoubled by reading this book. Many others, in anticipation of viewing the production, will get here the full length of plot and character detail and background to heighten their enjoyment.

The work novelized by Mr. MacMahon is offered as a complete romance, equally entertaining to all classes, nationalities or creeds. The story beginnings start somewhat earlier than Miss Macpherson's continuity, but are in harmony with it. The kindness of the scenarist and producer in giving access to their basic researches and historical and technical material is greatly appreciated.

It has been truly said that the Bible is the world's greatest treasure house of dramatic and romantic themes. Here the co-laborers first wrought and evolved the tremendous

power that makes the modern theme of "The Ten Commandments" so vital and enthralling.

A story as powerful and unusual as "The Ten Commandments" interests every home and every civilized being, for inherent in it is the foundation of our life, the mainspring of our being.

So this is a book you will not willingly lay down. Moses and Miriam and Dathan—Martha and Mary and John and Dan and Sally—speak to you with tremendous force, because a Power greater than mere mortal agency works in them and through them or despite them!

THE PUBLISHERS.

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PERSONS IN THE STORY

IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE
AND THE PLAYERS WHO ENACT THESE RÔLES
IN THE PICTURE

PLAYED BY

| | |
|--|------------------|
| MOSES (ie., he who was "drawn out") | Theodore Roberts |
| AARON, his brother and chief of the Levite priests | James Neill |
| RAMESSES II, King of Kings, and Pharaoh of Egypt | Charles De Roche |
| MIRIAM, the younger sister of Moses and Aaron | Estelle Taylor |
| AN EGYPTIAN TASKMASTER | Clarence Burton |
| DATHAN the Discontented | Lawson Butt |
| SON OF PHARAOH, the First Born and "apple of his eye" | Terrence Moore |
| THE WIFE OF PHARAOH | Julia Faye |
| THE BRONZE MAN, Attendant of the King of Kings | Noble Johnson |
| JOSHUA, a young man destined to com- mand | Gino Corrado |
| DAN MCTAVISH, who makes the five-dollar piece his "Golden Calf" | Rod La Rocque |
| JOHN MCTAVISH ("Being a carpenter is about all I'm good for") | Richard Dix |
| MRS. MARTHA MCTAVISH, exemplar of Covenanter piety | Edythe Chapman |
| MARY LEIGH, a waif from the Street | Leatrice Joy |
| SALLY LUNG, an almond-eyed half-Celestial from Pondicherry | Nita Naldi |
| REDDING, a city Building Inspector in league with Dan | Robert Edeson |
| THE DOCTOR | Charles Ogle |
| THE OUTCAST ("Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!") | Agnes Ayres |

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE: THE LAND OF GOSHEN

EAST of the ancient delta of the Nile there dwelt—more than three thousand years ago—a pastoral people whose flocks and herds and low habitations dotted the countryside. These white shepherd folk carried a tradition of wanderings from the banks of the Euphrates across Irak, Syria, Palestine, the desert of Sinai, and here at last they were domiciled under the sway of a dusky potentate, fellow subjects with the bronze-hued Egyptians.

In ancient times the desert and the highlands frequently made impact with the centers of River culture. Wild storms of fighting nomads swooped down upon delta empires, obliterating the native rule and setting up military overlordships of the fertile areas.

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But the forebears of the people of our story had come as guests. In their privileged position the descendants had multiplied and grown rich. The Land of Goshen could no longer hold them; they had filtered into the towns, some had acquired fortunes as merchants and warehousemen, and others were high in the King's service.

The intruders—once guests—were literally children of Israel; their common forefather, Jacob, who was renamed Israel (Champion of God) because the Angel of the Most High had wrestled with him in the way. In the old age of Jacob, his son Joseph had won favor of the military Shepherd who sat on the throne of Egypt.

Joseph has been truly called the world's first banker. In his capacity of Prime Minister he introduced the expedient of warehousing wheat against seasons of drouth, and his resourceful foresight saved millions of lives. Thus, in later years, through the wisdom of Joseph, the Israelites had a distinct claim on the gratitude of their hosts.

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Visualize then if you can the series of changes that led up to the Great Rift, and that

to our mighty theme, the giving of the Commandments. After the lapse of over four hundred years, what a different picture is presented!

For the few cattle herders, harbored in the marches of Egypt, had grown into a mighty racial minority of 600,000 souls. Their patrons, the Shepherd Kings, were overthrown by revolution. Jealousy and distrust were engendered. Both were fanned by the spirit of racial and religious hate. The Israelites bowed not down to Amen-Ra and Apis and Osiris. They could not be assimilated to the Egyptian barbaric civilization, civil or religious. And they were growing, growing, growing as to wealth and numbers, in face of the intense nationalism and the waves of bigotry that would suppress the alien and the unbeliever.

Came evil times on the Land of Goshen.

The speckled herds grazing the marches were tended by graybeards, old women and children whilst the able-bodied men and women were commandeered for State work. On various pretexts the fortunes of traders and artisans in the cities were confiscated. The last

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scion of Joseph was thrown out of the bureaucracy. The Pharaohs (as the Kings of Egypt were known) were pushing ahead a vast building program on which their slave labor was drafted.

By an irony of fate the Israelites were forced to build two of Pharaoh's vast Treasure Cities in their own Land. Pithom and Raamses—what monuments of blows and blood and tears and confiscation and killing toil those glories of Pharaoh became!

Beautiful they were in the grand style of far-flung wall and majestic column and sculptured relief; terrifying through the tall colossi of god-like Pharaohs guarding their portals; overwhelmingly splendid in the approach down the Avenue of Sphinxes, great couchant figures half-lion and half-man, which, repeated twenty-four times, seemed to propound four times and twenty the Riddle of Death!

Every brick of the palaces was shaped and sun-dried and laid by an Israelite peon. Every monument of sculpture was dragged there and erected by their hands. At the brick-making and masonry, or aboard the horrible Sphinx wagon creaking under a five-ton load, stood an Overseer wielding a mighty whip. The lash

came down on the bare backs of the loin-girt workers.

Cuffs and kicks were administered by the armed guards to the unfortunates the whip didn't reach. The spirit of grim tragedy was all about, for a darker fate met those who from mutiny or weakened physique did not fulfill the tasks. Often the offender was beaten to death in the sight of his loved ones. . . .

The policy of repression was indeed one of calculated cruelty. It was hoped by the Pharaoh and his counselors that the spirit of the aliens would be broken until they merged into the indistinguishable helotry. . . .

Strange to say, the tough-fibered ex-herders, inured to a life of privation and toil, withstood the rigors of slavery. The weak died or were weeded out. The strong continued to multiply. Instead of sinking into a common helotage with the Nubians, Libyans and other slaves, the children of God's "first champion" managed to retain their racial integrity.

Pharaoh cast about for other means of reducing them.

Infanticide was resorted to.

When the midwives (to their honor) lied to the King and confessed themselves unable to

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kill the babes at the door of the womb, the King and his counselors sent out a general order to all his people re the aliens of Goshen: "Every son that is born ye shall cast in the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive!"

Unhappy Land of Goshen! That was to be the end of Israelites as Israelites. Within a score of years at most the new generation of potential breeders and fighters would be choked off, and Egypt need not be harried by the nightmare thought of the alien dwellers within her gates possibly joining with her enemies against her. And the daughters ultimately would bear to their masters Egyptian sons, strengthening the blood of the older race!

Unhappy Land of Goshen! There was wailing and desolation for the tragedies of work camp and domestic hearth, but there was also keen circumvention of a people doggedly fighting being exterminated. A great many mothers succeeded in hiding and saving their boy babies, and such an incident forms the first event in the life of the Commandment-giver.

CHAPTER II

THE HEBREW PRINCE

“Look, Ament, see that toy boat floating up yonder!”

“Daughter of Ra, I pray thee, I see not!”

“Stupid! Cannot thy sharp old eyes make out the tiny thing bobbing up and down? So, turn thy head; follow the line of my arm, *now* thou canst see it. Hark! Did I hear a faint wail, or was it fantasy? Quick! Run to the Point ere it passes, and with a pole pull it in whatever it may be.”

The speaker was a bronze beauty of twenty-five, a married but childless daughter of Pharaoh, taking her afternoon dip in a Nile cove. The place was well screened from water craft by a thick clump of flags, whilst along the Nile's bank the handmaidens of the Princess leisurely paced keeping guard; and only the old servant Ament accompanied her mistress into the water to assist in the ablutions.

Among the thinner reeds towards the Point, the Princess had distinguished the gently bob-

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bing little boat. She was delighted a few minutes later to see old Ament returning with the captured craft, which she was holding straight in front of her like the butler with his tray.

The queer ark (as they called it) was, save for vent holes, entirely enclosed. It was cunningly constructed of bullrushes, made waterproof by pitch and slime. Laughing excitedly, the Princess unclasped the hasp and lifted the cover. What she saw—

“Oo-ee! It’s a baby,” said the Princess, in soft tones. “Look, Ament, what a sturdy little rascal, a beautiful little Horus, and I’m its Isis! But he’s hungry and c-c-cold—”

She took up the infant and cuddled it. “But look, Nurse, it’s been crying, and the big tears are still rolling down.” She carefully dried them. The infant gazed up at her, cooed and smiled. Tears were in the Princess’ eyes now, and she said: “Doubtless this is one of the Hebrews’ children, and Ra-Amen has sent it to me to save it!”

“There’s a young Hebrew girl here,” suggested Ament, “who seemed to have been watching the ark.” She brought forward a little maiden who made obeisance to the Egyptian princess and said:

“Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women who shall raise the child for thee?”

“Go,” said the Princess. She turned to her confidante, who had been holding the child, and said:

“He shall be called Moses (i.e., ‘drawn out’), and he shall be my son. Mayhap one day he will sit on the throne! Thanks be to Amen-Ra for this exceeding precious gift!”

.
In this tender comedy that precluded Israel’s terrific drama, the little maid was Moses’ sister, and the “nurse of the Hebrew women” was none other than their mother whom the Princess paid day’s wages to fulfill the loved task.

Sore at heart—withal happy that her son, now a scion of royalty, was saved from a darker fate—the mother, after the infancy and weaning, gave back the child to the daughter of Pharaoh.

Young Moses grew up a princeling learned in all the ways and arts of the Egyptian court, a fearless swordsman, an accomplished archer, an acolyte observant behind the scenes of priestly craft and mages’ tricks.

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Successive Divine Pharaohs passed away and were entombed in mummified immortality. His loved foster-mother died without reaping her ambition. He never openly could claim his own parental blood-kin. But the whisper about the "Hebrew Prince" was ever in the air; the leaders among the Israelites talked to him secretly. At their request he went out to the work places of the people, and learned with his own eyes that his nation was enslaved more cruelly than the very beasts of the field.

To his hot, youthful spirit the spectacle was maddening. With difficulty the Prince restrained himself from attacking wicked Overseers and hacking them to pieces—a course of conduct that would have brought about a wholesale butchery. But, returning one day from one of these scenes of flagellation, he saw by the roadside an Egyptian beating unmercifully an undernourished Hebrew laborer.

"Stop!" cried the Prince, intervening between the pair. With his staff (for he was walking incognito) he diverted what might have been the death stroke.

The brutish master faced him with uplifted weapon. "Who are you that dare to intervene twixt me and my slave?" he cried.

“I am—” Suddenly the newcomer bethought him the secret mustn’t be told. “*Never mind what I am!*” he replied, quickly glancing about to see that there were no witnesses of the encounter, “but if you touch him again, *I’ll kill you!*”

The Egyptian struck the victim a contemptuous side blow, then was upon the stranger like a fury. Seeing red, the Prince drew forth his dagger and felled him. The thrust was true-aimed to the heart. With but a groan or two the brutish slave-driver expired, even as the beaten victim was kissing the hem of Moses’ robe and thanking his deliverer. “Go your way,” said the Prince to the wretched man, “and let none hear of what befell. . . . I will attend to this.”

After the slave had departed, the younger man scooped a hole in a sand dune, pushed the Egyptian’s carcass into it, and covered it up. He then obliterated the traces of blood from his clothing and from the scene of the encounter. Appalled at the shedding of blood, he nevertheless knew that he had struck to save a life, his own mayhap, the other’s certainly. And returning homeward he racked his wits to devise some scheme of creating a party at

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Court that should influence the Pharaoh to temper the Israelite oppression.

Alas, the hierarchical clique, bent on destroying his kindred, was all powerful. . . .

Oddly enough, 'twas the attempted rôle of peacemaker among his people that was the immediate cause of driving Moses out of Egypt.

The second day thereafter, he again went forth incognito and spied two Hebrews fighting in a field. Approaching he said to the attacker, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?"

The man turned on him with angry abuse. Evidently he recognized the "Hebrew prince," and word of the event of day before yesterday had spread widely, despite the injunction to secrecy.

"Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" said the quarreler, sarcastically. He came nearer, and leered into Moses' face. "Do—you—mean—to—kill—me," he said tensely, "*even—as—you—killed—the—Egyptian?*"

Sorrowfully Moses turned away from the scene of the brothers' strife.

If even the field workers knew him as the slave-beater's killer, surely it must reach the thousand ears and eyes of the Court and of Pharaoh.

Presently he received direct information that Pharaoh knew, and had sent out emissaries to dispatch him.

There was no time to lose!

Two of the Israelitish leaders contrived an effective disguise and sent him with a caravan bound across the Sinaitic peninsula. Privately he decided to slip away from it betimes and find a habitation in the land of Midian, through which they were to pass.

He was young and strong, proven in battle, inured to the outdoors. Could he not (like his ancestors) take up the shepherd's crook, and in that rough career find living and refuge?

A fortnight later we see the erstwhile princeling seated by a well in Midian, wondering what the future is to bring forth.

The well in that semi-arid land was the scene of endless disputes. At eve fighting nomads would appear with their flocks and hold it against all comers, even the resident shepherds of the neighborhood who held proprietary rights. Woe betide, then, the luckless girl flock-tenders! They too were driven away, often waiting until the late night watches before they could get to it to water their parched rams and ewes.

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Just such an event impended the day Moses sat by the well.

Seven daughters of the aged local chief and high priest approached with their flocks, and again the nomad shepherds would have driven them away. But this time the stranger at the well stood up to help them. The stranger was tall and muscular and well-armed. His masterful authority awed the nomads, backed as it was by his gleaming blade and his evident prowess. The comely shepherdesses were quickly served and quickly sped. The fugitive Prince felt himself well repaid by their lively gratitude and the favor he had found in the eyes of the comeliest, Zipporah.

A short time later Moses was summoned to the home of Jethro or Reuel their father. He was an honored guest at the breaking of bread.

“Tarry with us a while,” said the pious Sheik. “Thou art a man of spirit, and we have need of thee.”

Thus the fugitive from the face of Pharaoh became Sheik Jethro’s lieutenant in the part-shepherding, part-warring life of the Desert. He married the lovely Zipporah and rejoiced in a son. He mastered all the secret lore of the “priest of Midian.” Instead of the luxury,

glitter and intrigue of the Court of Egypt—false, hollow and rotten since founded on slavery—he was a free “prince of the desert” in the tending of Jethro’s flocks.

CHAPTER III

SIXTY YEARS AFTER—

ABOUT sixty years after these events, two venerable men brought promise of God's deliverance to the oppressed slave-dwellers of Goshen. The strange message was as follows:

“I, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, have surely visited you, have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters: for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey. . . .”

Imagine the first reaction of incredulity, wonder and mockery in Goshen over these words! For nearly a hundred years successive generations had been habituated to slavery. Even the worship of the God of Israel was forbidden. The cult was secretly practiced (though neglected by multitudes of the work-weary who preferred the sensuous excitements

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of the Bull-God Mnevis), and its ministers were not widely known save to the elders. One of these spoke up:

“We know thee, ancient Aaron, who art of the tribe of Levi and high priest of our people’s God. But who is this other, the bald, white-bearded stranger thou broughtest? And what sign have ye that Jehovah will put forth his hand?”

“He is Moses my brother, the prophet of Jehovah,” replied the sage addressed. “Knew ye aught of the Hebrew prince?”

A murmur of astonishment ran through the assembly. Few had not heard the oft-repeated legend of the adoptive Prince, exiled for fighting for his people.

“God out of the burning bush,” continued Aaron, “commanded him to deliver Israel. Sixty years in the silences of the desert, he is slow and halting of speech. God hath ordered that I shall be the spokesman, saying unto him of me: ‘Even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God!’ ”

Awe seized the elders at the sight of the silent Prophet who handed to Aaron a rod. The high priest cast it upon the ground. Lo!

the lifeless stick was transformed into a live and wriggling serpent. For the first time Moses (for it was none other than our gallant young hero, now grown very old) swayed from his rigid demeanor. He seized the wriggling snake by the tail, and it came back to his hand—a lifeless stick.

“Jahveh! Jahveh!” shouted the elders and people. “Let us bow down and worship to the God of the Hebrews and follow this, his Prophet!”

It had not been a welcome task to the aged recluse to come out of the Desert. Himself, wife and sons had prospered in Midian. All his ties were there. Though still strong in the green and patriarchal vigor of eighty, he naturally looked forward to an eve of contentment and measured action.

But a disturbing Inner Voice prompted to obey the hest of his long-time-gone young manhood and to die (if need be) in the freeing of his people. Nature commanded what his heart prompted. God spake to him out of the Burning Bush. The wind, the lightning, the sky enforced the message. And Moses knew that he was cunning—more cunning than all the Egyp-

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tian magicians—in controlling and manipulating the secret forces of Nature. His foresight of the course of the elements was uncanny. He performed wonders that caused his Desert intimates almost to look upon him as a god.

He could not speak eloquently, but Jehovah had prepared for this. His elder brother, the high-priest Aaron (who had lived all this while in Egypt) was the orator of the tribe; he was to be the spokesman and the sign-worker.

The call to vengeance on the oppressor and the salvation of Israel was irresistible, and Moses answered it. He bade good-by to Midian and the house of Jethro, taking Zipporah and his sons with him. In the Wilderness he met Aaron, sent out to meet him. They worshiped together on the Holy Mount. There Moses charged Aaron with the full content of the Divine embassy, instructing him also in the signs he had acquired in the Desert. They moved on into Goshen, where their kinsfolk (save Miriam, a younger sister) were long since deceased.

Dead, too, were the men who had sought Moses' life; dead his aforetime companions of the Court. . . . They were as strangers in a strange land except for an Elder here and

there who remembered Aaron as the furtive, retired High Priest. . . . The stage was set for their high but seemingly impossible Mission. . . . The wonder-workers from Midian made good of the Elders' assembly, and whilst the people prayed, entered the gorgeous portals of the City of Raamses to beard the Pharaoh.

CHAPTER IV

A PETITION TO THE KING

“Let my people go (saith the Lord God of Israel) that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness!”

THE Hall in which they found themselves was of vast proportions and gloomy magnificence. Its walls were decorated with cunning picture inlay and fantastic hieroglyph. In the longer dimension two rows of fluted pillars gave a majestic vista up to the steps of the Throne and beyond to a great basalt image of Man-God-Lion in half body. Against the herculean black bosom was set the reigning Pharaoh's dais, entablatured with the dread ensigns of his royalty.

Before the pillars commanding the first flight of steps two live lions paced restlessly to the limit of their chains, and when they roared the farthest confines of the palace heard the sound!

Above the second steps, on each side of the dais, the huge arms of the stone Colossus terminated in couchant paws. Illumined by the

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strange diffused light which is said to have been the secret precursor of our Edisons, the Hall now kindled into life with the dazzling gems and jewels of the courtiers and the brightly flashing lances and battle-axes of the soldiery.

“Make way for the Pharaoh!”

The figure that entered and reposed on the dais while all abased themselves was majestic as a god. In its right hand rested the snake-twined scepter of Egypt, terminating in the lotus.

The monarch's elaborate head-piece was fronted by the uræus, the carved semblance of a striking serpent. His necklace was a triple row of gems, flanked on either shoulder by the lotus. Below there depended, on his bare stomach, the sacred scarab.

The royal arms were ablaze with jeweled armlets of gold, and the girdle and knee-length kirtle were of equal magnificence, whilst golden greaves and jeweled sandals, of which the points worked back in high circles, completed the barbaric array.

Weak men now and again had sat on the throne of Egypt, but here was no weakling! Rameses II, the last and greatest of the monu-

A PETITION TO THE KING 25

ment builders, had made all Egypt and all the subject races ministers of his vast exploits. Even now the Israelites were completing for him the age-long labors on Pithom and Raamses, whilst his vaulting ambition leaped forward to new enterprise—temples, palaces, the mausoleum that should give him immortality! Power spoke in his mighty half-nude frame, his bold eyes and his handsome insolent features—autocratic power without a trace of chivalry.

What a contrast, to the outer eye, in the petitioners that approached him!

A gleaming-eyed, unshorn old man with profuse white locks and billowing beard, clad in a plain desert robe and carrying a desert pilgrim's staff. With him a shorter graybeard as old or older, more ceremonially dressed in cap and figured garments, upholding an emblematic rod surmounted by a triangle.

“They be Moses and Aaron, chiefs of the laboring tribe known as Israel,” said the chamberlain, “and crave audience of thee.”

The shorter man would have abased himself, but the old patriarch prevented. Anger gleamed in Pharaoh's look as he imperiously pointed to the ground to command the obei-

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sance. But bowing only, not prostrating themselves, the strange visitors came to the foot of the steps. The first words of Aaron, the spokesman, so astonished the monarch that the breach of ceremonial was forgotten.

“Let my people go, saith the Lord God of Israel, that they may hold a feast unto me in the Wilderness!”

“Who is your Lord God,” thundered Ramesses, “that I should obey His voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go!”

“The God of the Hebrews hath met with us,” replied the men reverently. “Let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice unto Him, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

The patience of the monarch was exhausted. What cared he for the Lord Jehovah, a desert deity—he who was the divine representative of Amen-Ra? Plainly these impudent strangers were stirring up trouble under religion’s cloak. Only a little of it, and his building schemes might be halted.

“Behold, the people of the Land of Goshen now are many,” shouted the King, “and ye make them rest from their burdens. Where-

A PETITION TO THE KING 27

fore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the Israelites from their works? Get ye back to your burdens! I the Pharaoh have spoken.”

He turned his head, and the petitioners were quickly conducted out of the palace. . . .

The first essay of Moses and Aaron resulted in more grievous affliction for their people.

Pharaoh, quick to act, decided that a more rigorous slavery would subdue the hopes of respite or freedom.

Hitherto the material had been furnished to the brickmakers and masons. Baled straw was brought to the workers, and, using the straw as a binder, they fashioned the bricks out of the mud of the Nile.

“Hereafter,” ran the edict of Pharaoh, “I will not give you straw. Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it—yet naught of your work shall be diminished!”

Naturally the foremen of the people of Goshen (whom the taskmasters had set over them) were unable to deliver the daily tale, since the children of Israel spent much of their time in scouring the fields for straw stubble.

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The foremen were beaten by the overseers, and their cry came up to Pharaoh.

The King gave them rough answer.

“Ye are an idle people,” announced the Pharaoh scornfully. “ ’Tis therefore ye say, Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore now and work, for there shall be no straw given you, yet shall ye deliver the daily tale of bricks!”

Now was witnessed the sad spectacle of the weaklings, the little children, the infirm and decrepit of both sexes, working all day long in the fields and often far into the night to gather the stubble for the laborers’ daily stint. Hearth fires went out, the toilers snatched cold victual. The crops grew rank with weeds, and the cattle were neglected. The mooing of cows, bleating of sheep and braying of donkeys were added to the wails of the humanly oppressed. With whips and blows the cruel overseers sped the unintermittent toil.

“Ye have made us abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants!” groaned the foremen to the new leaders. “Ye have put in their hand a sword to slay us. Let Jehovah judge twixt you and us!”

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A PETITION TO THE KING 29

Perhaps the saddest note of all was of personal affliction.

The brothers' beautiful younger sister was a burden-bearer before the Sphinxes.

In cohort with other young Hebrew girls, she wore a heavy yoke around neck and shoulders. In hods suspended on each side, they were obliged to carry staggering loads of bricks. At other times leathern bags were attached to the yoke sides, and the female slaves were used as water-carriers.

There was no let-up from morn till night. The only variant was some overseer's harshness, often ending in yoking the unfortunate offender with a draught animal to a cart, thus converting God's semblance into a veritable "beast of burden"!

Miriam was comely, large-eyed and raven-haired. The grinding toil had not subdued her flowering youth nor soured her looks. In a free land she would have been the cynosure of the bold who admire the fair, but here in oppressed Goshen she was trothed to a sensitive and delicate youth who symbolized to her the pathos of her people.

"The water bottle!" shouted the overseer from his Sphinx wagon.

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He was a great hairy, half-nude man, wielding a mighty whip, and his thunderous voice made many quake.

Miriam, the nearest slave, approached. He detached one of the huge leather bags, and greedily drank. The girl's eye was drawn to her lover, pulling on the Sphinx rope a few feet away. With outstretched hand and piteous expression that said more than words, he begged water. Momentarily she left the overseer's side and gave him to drink.

"Back!" shouted that functionary, his own thirst quenched. "Pull her back from that dog of Israel, I say!" he yelled.

A guard violently jerked the sister of Moses and Aaron away. The force of the movement was such that she was thrown to the ground. Like a roused tigress the girl recovered herself and again sprang toward her lover. The overseer hopped up and down with rage—one hand shaking the whip, the other pointing an agitated finger at the disobedience.

This time the attendant yanked Miriam yet more roughly.

His jerks and blows stretched her half-stunned upon the ground. On the overseer's face was tyrant vengeance. As she was com-

ing to, he bent over her with a ferocious expression.

“Beware thou of crossing me,” he said, “lest haply I work thy leman to death, and make thee yokefellow to the ox!” . . .

Yes, the overseer had his marked pets and aversions. . . .

The slowly reviving Miriam could not help shuddering as she looked up at her gorilla-like Taskmaster. . . .

CHAPTER V

THE NINE PLAGUES

“Behold, I will smite all thy borders.”

Low as was the state of all Israel, wretched the plight of his blood kin, and loud the plaint of the headmen against the new movement, the Inner Voice made Moses go on.

We must think of him as of an Indomitable Will to vex, harass and annoy; the chief wonder-worker of Egypt, versed in both the Egyptian mysteries and the desert lore; above all, the prophet of the true God!

He had found God in the wilderness. The Almighty dweller in the smoke and fire of the Sinai Mount was his right arm and his sure defense.

The eloquence of Aaron and the divine power expressed through Moses again brought the people together, and (though the people had murmured) reassured them of Jehovah's promise. It was now meet that Magic should be exerted.

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The frowning Pharaoh, wondering that his rigorous measures had failed to subdue sedition, consented to a trial of strength twixt the mages of Egypt and the skill of the brothers. He thought he foresaw an easy victory, discrediting the self-appointed helot leaders.

But the teachings of Jethro (in which Moses had cunningly instructed Aaron) came into play.

With equal facility the mages of Egypt and the Israelite high priest transformed their divining rods into serpents, back into harmless sticks, and presto! again into serpents.

But as the serpents of the Nile magicians wriggled along the ground, lo, the big snake that Aaron had let loose seized each of them in turn and swallowed them!

This was a course of procedure not given in the Egyptian magical books, nor even within the ken of the God Memnon's priests, who could make the Sun's ray burn or slay, evoke voices out of the Air and perform many similar wonders.

"Ye are great magicians," said Pharaoh finally, "but I will not let Israel go!"

Their magic had not failed, however, for it had given the two wonder-workers charmed

lives. In the primitive view, 'twas little use trying to kill a mage. Most folk believed that his supernatural powers defied corporeal death!

Now started a series of disasters, devastations and plagues that harried the beautiful Land of the Nile as it had not been harried within human memory or the carven records of its twenty dynasties.

In the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, Moses and Aaron turned the waters of Nilus red. The fish died. The river stank! Potable water could be had only by well-digging.

The Egyptian sorcerers duplicated the horrendous feat, and so they did with its sequel plague—the millions of frogs, frogs, frogs that came hopping, hopping, hopping out of the reddened river into the homes, sleeping places and even ovens and bread-pans of the wailing subjects of the Pharaoh. When the river parasitism had disappeared and the frogs had perished, there came a plague of lice o'er the dusty land, and this was inevitably followed by the grievous swarms of flies that Moses alone had predicted.

The sorcerers could note and claim as their enchantment the gradual growths in the river

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and the march of the frog invasion, but the suddenness of the new plagues baffled them completely. "This is the finger of God!" they confessed to Pharaoh. Messengers came running to Pharaoh with the news that whereas all Egypt was corrupted by flies there were none in Goshen! The God of Moses had put this sign of division betwixt His people and their Egyptian oppressors.

The cowed monarch offered religious toleration where they abode, but Moses rejected the half-boon. Israel must go three days' journey into the Wilderness to sacrifice.

"Ye shall not go very far away," replied the monarch, figuring that he would provide an army for the escort. For the first time he had yielded partially to the men's demands. Like the preceding plagues, the fly pest died out after the King had sued to the desert Prophet. Nevertheless, Pharaoh had no real intention of fulfilling his word, and with respite came renewed refusal.

The disease and death of the Egyptian cattle; an eruptive ailment that attacked the men, women and children; the violent hailstorms that cast down the flax and barley and ruined the fruit trees; the swaths of the seventeen-

year-old locust that completed the vegetal devastation; and the Great Darkness falling on the land of Egypt for three days, during which all work ceased and the scared folk cowered and shivered in their homes—these were the strange visitations that marked the long struggle of the Pharaoh and Moses whilst the former parleyed and haggled, promised and refused, until Moses at last in the other's extremity announced the full program of his demands.

We must go forward a little in our story to anticipate this crisis and clearly set forth what these terms were:

All Israel must be allowed to depart with their goods and cattle. Yea, rich Egypt must fully equip them for their journey! Then—and then only—the strange visitations of Nature would be stayed, and happiness would be restored to the harried homeland and its people.

Splitting over the question of taking the herds and flocks, the monarch and the Prophet parted. The King knew full well that the Israelites taking with them their possessions would never return. The State would be deprived of the services of a quarter million able-bodied laborers, not counting the weaklings that gathered the brick straw.

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His enterprises would wither.

The magnificent mausoleum that was to give him immortality might never be built!

And the shame to Egypt of letting a subject nation of 600,000 peons make a free getaway: the mark of it, the disgrace of it, would be ever upon him, like a defeat by a foreign power.

The proud Rameses II, shaking off his awe of the Great Magician, trusting mayhap that the nine plagues had finished Nature's toll, up-raised his palms outwardly and said:

“Get thee from me, thou prophet of the Israelites! Take heed of thyself, and see my face no more. For in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die!”

In equal wrath the strange, white-bearded Wizard from Horeb slowly replied: “Thou hast spoken well—I shall see thy face no more!”

Little thought Pharaoh, then, that there should be yet two more dread meetings by his own act!

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What Moses had done was but the faint inkling of what he was to do. Already he had fired the sorely oppressed for the hope and trial of redemption. All Israel knew him as the prophet of the true God. Goshen had es-

aped the pestilence and darkness, the disease and death that had stricken the Nile lands. The wonders of his achievement were on every tongue. Slaves still, but a close-knit nation bound by the tie of faith in Jehovah and His prophet, they were about to inaugurate the most forward step in history.

For the Covenant twixt God and Israel at Mt. Sinai is the beginning and the essence of civilized Law. Greater than magical wonder-worker, greater than primitive prophet of Nature's convulsions (though supreme in each), Moses stands the revealer under God of the framework of our collective being.

Eternal Law of the Ages!

The fundamental precepts of right conduct marked out, and the inexorable penalty, for the "wages of Sin is indeed Death"! Such was the magnificent contribution of Moses to human affairs. . . .

CHAPTER VI

A TRAGEDY BEFORE THE SPHINX

THE gorgeous Treasure City of Raamses was nearly done, and the last Sphinx was being moved by Sphinx wagon to its site before the Palace. Word had been passed that Pharaoh would shortly issue from the Gate of Colossi, the main city gate flanked by four heroic statues of his ancestors.

The huge colossi, thirty-five feet high above the wide pediments and of such proportions that the little finger was big as a man's arm, faced the multitudes of toiling slaves.

The children of Israel were doing the work of horses. . . .

Six long ropes were attached to the great wheeled platform carrying the five-ton load, and each was manned by fifteen or twenty tuggers, whilst scores of others pushed forward the sides or bent to impel it from behind.

Horribly the wagon creaked in its snail-like progress over the sand. Mightily the overseer on the platform cracked his whip on the

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tense and knotted bare backs, and raucously he cried:

“Haste, Ye Dogs, haste ye to finish the work ere He comes!” Z-z-zipp! The flail descended on a group of weaklings. “Throw them out, I say,” yelled the Taskmaster to a guard. “Throw them out, and put in those other fellows. . . . *Ready! Altogether, heave!*” Slowly the wagon moved forward.

The Taskmaster caught sight of Miriam with her leather panniers. Wielding the flail had made him hot and thirsty. He summoned her, laid a rough hand on her shoulder, and jerked the nearer bag from her hands. Like an animal he drank—more like animal than man indeed he looked and acted, in his kirtle of leopard’s hide, Beast-Man of huge limbs and trunk, hairy chest, and ferocious features!

Below there was a commotion midway of the right-hand rope. A man had fallen, overpowered by the intense exertion and heat. A dozen pairs of hands stretched out to the girl, begging water to revive him. From the step of the Sphinx wagon she saw that the prostrate one was her sweetheart. Forgetting the Taskmaster’s wrath, she ran to him.

As she bathed his hot temples and wrists and

moistened his parched lips, the man revived. She hugged him in a protective embrace. The enfeebled worker managed to rise and to make a show of resuming his task. The cruel Taskmaster had seen the violation of his orders. In a fury he would have dealt hardly with Miriam. But the necessity of finishing the job estopped him. Throwing the water bottle out of the scene, he rose and started to lash the workers.

Two men helped Miriam to her feet. While the big brute on the cart re-started the drive, she had quickly slipped out of sight. But the violent jerk on the ropes caused the enfeebled lover of the girl to lose his balance. He fell again, this time in the direct path of the wheels of the juggernaut.

“Kneel to the King of kings, the Conqueror of conquerors! Kneel to the mighty Pharaoh—dogs of Israel!”

It was the royal Herald shouting from the steps of the nearest Colossus. The Taskmaster enforced the order. His attendants beat down the bent backs of the absorbed or unwilling. The flail flashed stingingly across the sullen features of Dathan the Discontented, who dared once to gaze upwards with a venomous look. . . .

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The Pharaoh came, magnificent, begemmed, seated in a royal palanquin borne by sixteen bearers, and preceded by a double file of soldiery. The Taskmaster, eager for the royal favor, bade the Sphinx-moving resume as soon as the act of obeisance had been made. All rose to their posts save one—the poor wretch in the wagon's path. Stretched flat beneath his rope, he was unable to get up nor could his companions pull him away.

The Taskmaster looked towards the Pharaoh as for a signal. That monarch had seen the supine figure, but there was no mercy in his heart.

“If a man clog the wheels of the Pharaoh,” said Rameses II, “he shall be ground into the dust!”

The overseer's savage eye lighted as he urged the wagon on and fulfilled his grudge. Miriam, the object of his hate, had returned.

Powerless, she saw the huge wheel mangle her lover to death. . . .

Only after it had passed was she permitted to come close to the lifeless and mangled form. . . .

“Lord God of Israel,” she prayed, upraising her hand to high Heaven. “See the afflic-

tion of Thy people which are in Egypt, and hear our cry! . . .”

The Pharaoh had a beautiful little son who was the darling of his eye. The last encounters of the monarch with the prophets of Israel should have prepared him for a terrible eventuality. The Son of Pharaoh was indeed wiser than he.

As the gaunt prophets entered the full-panoplied Court and stood at the steps of the throne before the royal family, the little boy ran to the side of the throne and cried:

“Mighty Pharaoh, my Father—this man (Moses) has tormented us already with nine plagues! Let us slay him, before a tenth!”

Rameses smiled indulgently upon his son. He was minded (as we have said) to let the Israelites worship for a little in the wilderness if that would content them. Yet the haughty bearing of Moses, who stopped Aaron from obeisance, provoked him.

Pharaoh rose and imperiously pointed his hand to the ground in sign of their duty.

“I kneel but to One,” Moses answered the monarch, “the Lord God of Israel, Who hath

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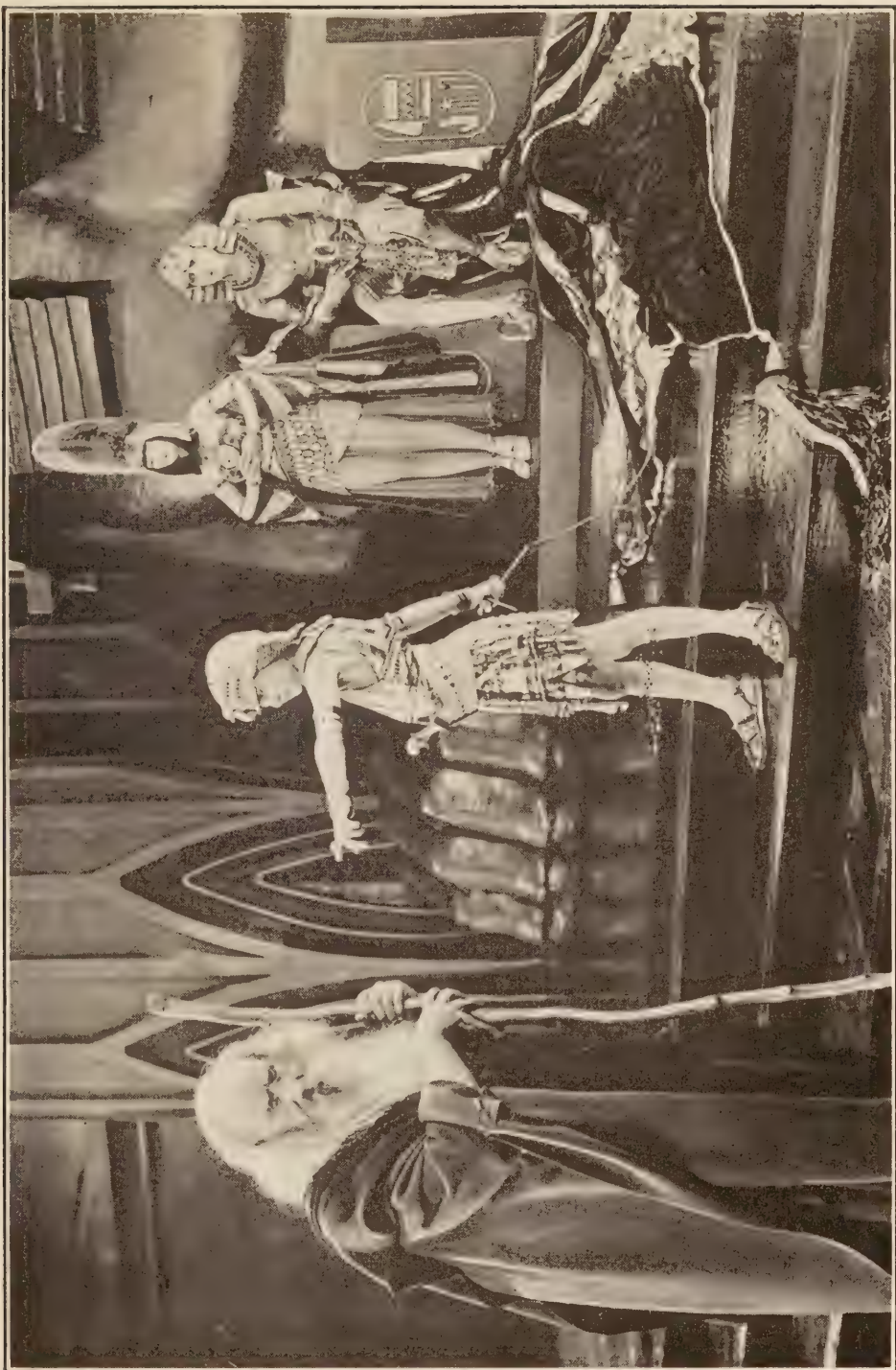
smitten the Egyptians with nine plagues because thou dost not let His people go!"

The God of Israel indeed! Pharaoh looked away to the Altar, where before bright flames an Egyptian priest was invoking the statues of Heqt, Pasht and Harmakhis, of Apis, Mnevis and Anubis. The Captain of the Guard entered the throne room and pledged fealty with his sword. "Let more work be laid upon these idle Israelites!" ordered the King as if in answer to the prophet's pridefulness.

When the Captain departed, Moses mounted the steps of the throne. His eyes were coals of fire. His voice had all the portentous quality of a judgment as he said:

"Be warned, O Pharaoh, let us Israel depart, or God will come into the midst of Egypt, and all the First Born shall die—from the First Born of Pharaoh even unto the First Born of the captive in the dungeon."

Pharaoh rose at the astounding message, and the wife of Pharaoh left her handmaidens and hastened over to him. She too had heard the direful words. She clutched the King's left wrist and placed her other comely hand upon his shoulder, as if imploring her consort to stay his wrath and avert the doom. On Pharaoh's



The Paramount Picture.

The Ten Commandments.

THE BOY BROKE THE TENSE SITUATION BY ATTACKING THE PROPHET.

TRAGEDY BEFORE SPHINX 47

face was defiance. Yet the coal-like eyes of Moses seemed to burn into the royal pair. Even sans speech his grimly set pose and visage seemed to shout "Beware!"

The little boy broke the tense situation by running in and attacking the Prophet.

He carried a small, elegant, child's riding whip with which he lashed furiously. The blows fell thick and fast on the ample black robe of the majestic old man, who did not notice them.

The Pharaoh's face relaxed into the grimest little smile at the fury of his offspring. He gently put the boy one side, then his face grew stern again as he asked:

"Thinkest thou that the curse of thy God can destroy the Son of Pharaoh—whose golden sandals have been beaten from the crowns of conquered Kings?"

"Yea, my God is Almighty and must prevail, even over thee!" answered Moses solemnly. "Wilt thou be warned and let Israel go?"

'Twas then (as told in the preceding chapter) that the King and the Prophet mooted the conditions of the leave-taking until at last the angered Pharaoh—resolute to deny the complete release that Moses demanded—said he would kill Moses if the disturber ever showed

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his face at Court again. "Thou hast spoken well," said Moses, turning away. "I shall see thy face no more!"

The little lad had watched the altercation.

As the Prophet slowly went down the steps to rejoin the waiting Aaron, the boy sprang forward again and whipped the retreating figure. From the top step he hurled the whip after the priests of Israel. . . .

The divine Pharaoh spoke. "We are rid forever of these vain babblers," he announced. "Let there be dancing and music!"

Backward the exiting prophets looked upon a gay and profane scene.

A comely band of gauzily clad musicians played tinkling and seductive airs. The while, a lissome young beauty knelt on the great pave before Pharaoh, then rising with upstretched arms, whirled ecstatic in passionate dance, the wide-floating draperies revealing every contour of her form.

The plaint of Israel—the dread warning—had been completely obliterated from the hearts and minds of the dance-enthralled spectators. . . . Blind to all else, they saw not the terrible face of Moses.

CHAPTER VII

TWILIGHT OF THE OLD GODS

“And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the First Born in the land of Egypt, and there was a great cry in Egypt—for there was not a house where there was not one dead!”

THE Plague of Death!

What awesome images, what wailing and desolation, what torture and black despair of the bereaved, this age-long concept brings up!

A concept of which no faint shadow was apprehended by the modern world till the World War showed us. Only War (that grisly specter) can be compared in its devastating mortality to the disease epidemic that anciently struck swiftly and in an incredibly short time wiped out the flower of a people. There was no way, then, of staying these germ-spread (and often vermin-brought) scourges of humanity.

The death plague which struck Egypt was escaped by her Israelite slaves. To the Hebrew the event was a double deliverance.

Lamb's blood sprinkled that night on the lintels of every Hebrew dwelling—a rite en-

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forced by the command of Moses—was the symbol of their immunity. The scourge passed Goshen by. The hardy helots were untouched by its ravages. . . .

Instead, all Israel was awake, vibrant and stirring. The power of God was at work as expressed through His prophet. He had gone direct from Pharaoh's court to the camp of the leaders and had predicted the end of the struggle.

The Lord would execute full judgment on Pharaoh and Egypt, he told them. The destroying Angel would spare the homes and the First Born of the Chosen People wherever the sacrificial lamb was slain and its blood scattered over the door-posts.

They must eat the meat of the Passover (as he called it), with their robes girded for a journey, with shoes on their feet, and with their staves in their hands; and they must eat it in haste.

Each family was also enjoined to borrow from the nearest Egyptians whatever valuables the latter might lend, particularly jewels of silver and jewels of gold. The awe of Moses and the fears of the plague-stricken people would result in a veritable harvest!

One is to think now of the country of Goshen this historic eve as a seething hive, almost ready to swarm; heads of the households making ready the blood-sacrifice—the herdsmen herding their flocks—the young folks packing the domestic gear—the children all excitement and questions as they eagerly helped—the oldsters levying valuables from the neighbors in the awesome name of Moses' cult. The housewives stopped baking bread. The leeks, greens and savories no longer stewed in the pot.

After blood-sprinkling the lintels before every household, the families sat down to meat and uncooked herbs—bowing and worshiping as Moses had commanded, to the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. . . .

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That midnight the Pharaoh sat in the royal throne room which (save the regal dais) was empty and deserted. He had wished to be alone, fighting the inner Furies which assailed him. Egypt was sick. The land had not recovered from the nine plagues' visitations. Pestilence was abroad, so his ministers reported. The Israelites continued refractory. As the monarch brooded, he was very much

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surprised to hear footsteps, for usually none dared enter the presence unless when summoned.

Far down the long corridor Rameses recognized the figure of the Bronze Man, an Ethiopian who was his favorite attendant. The man was carrying something—what it was the obscurity of the pillared corridor made it difficult to distinguish. The Pharaoh bent his head again.

The sound of steps grew louder. The Bronze Man was followed by the Queen and her attendants. Suppressed sobs were heard, and commotion—from the Hall of Osiris there came a wailing as of voices in the distance.

The Bronze Man had cleared the pillars which partly hid him, and was before the King of Kings. In his arms he carried a small body. In a choked voice he said:

“Mighty Pharaoh, thy Son is dead!”

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Dazed, Rameses received the little body from the attendant's arms. . . .

In a near-by corridor the Queen had sunk to the floor, and with her kneeling attendants was wailing. . . .

Like one transfixed, the Egyptian king held

the stricken form in his arms while one should count twenty, then in a strange voice spoke:

“Summon thou Moses!”

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The Prophet was already waiting at the door of the palace. He answered the summons instantly, for he knew that the hour had come. Swiftly he passed through the corridor and up the steps of the throne, then, with outstretched arm pointing to Pharaoh’s cold and lifeless burden, told the tragic general calamity of which the death of Pharaoh’s son was a part.

“This night the Lord hath smitten all the First Born in the Land of Egypt, and against the gods of Egypt hath he executed judgment!” He paused and spoke again. “Now therefore, O Pharaoh, wilt thou let his people depart?”

Shuddering at the enacted doom, his hand averted and his features agonized, the stricken man replied:

“Get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel, to serve your Lord. Take your flocks and herds—and be-gone!”

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Moses had triumphed.

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The long sought permission was wrested at last, and the old Wonder Worker of Horeb went forth to summon the waiting host.

But what of Pharaoh?

The crazed father could not yet believe his son was beyond hope.

On the Altar still burned brightly the orange flames to Anubis the Jackal; Mnevis, the beloved Bull God; Harmakhis the hawk-nosed; Heqt the frog-headed; Pasht the lioness; Apis, the holy Bull of Memphis.

Bearing his son's body, Pharaoh carried it to these age-long protectors of Egypt. Gently he laid it down at the edge of the Altar, looking up questioningly at the huge statues. More brightly the sacrificial flames leaped up! Still embracing the dead body of his boy and with the other hand upraised in supplication, he cried:

“Hearken, ye Gods of Egypt! Show that ye are stronger than this God of Israel—and call back life into the body of my Son!”

Alas! the animal deities heard not nor could they grant the prayer! Vainly, through the remaining watches of the night, Pharaoh petitioned their succor.

The rosy hues did not come back to the pal-

lid cheeks. The little frame stiffened in rigor mortis.

The morning dimness seemed the twilight of the Old Gods, powerless to restore what the God of Israel had stricken. Broad day broke upon their helpless, ugly impassivity, and Pharaoh's anger waxed hot against Israel, for his deified images of metal and stone could not put life back into the loved form.

At last the King rose, addressing the little figure on the altar:

“My First Born whom I have loved—hear me! This day shall Israel be ground under the chariots of Egypt—thus shalt thou be revenged upon their God!”

Striding across the great hall, Pharaoh struck the Palace gong three times.

The effect was as of magic.

Headed by their captain, the ever-ready lancemen of the royal dwelling clattered down the stairway en masse, their lances first upraised, then abased to the King, whilst the captain of the guard did reverence.

“Sound ye the trumpets!” cried Pharaoh in his blazing wrath. “Make ready the chariots, for we shall be avenged a thousand fold upon these dogs of Israel!”

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At the Captain's command, the gleaming force rushed up the stairway again. There was much to do, and there was need of haste. Whilst the trumpet spake, summoning the hosts, and the Master of the Horse commanded forth six hundred fighting chariots, the tiring women girded the terrible King of Kings in his armor. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

THE ESCAPE

“And it came to pass, even the selfsame night, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.”

Six hours before the mighty Rameses gave the command to his army of chariots to pursue, all Israel was on the march.

All Israel had been ready, and the word of Moses flew in the quick orders of his lieutenants and the speeding of his swift messengers to every part of the little province of Goshen. The objective of the host was the wilderness on the east, where the Red Sea sends up an arm to the place now known as Suez.

“Israel is free! Israel is free!”

Miriam cried the tidings from the high pediment of one of the Colossi. Dathan roared it with full-sounding fury against the oppressor. Joshua, born to command, magnificently voiced the soul-thrilling message of Moses.

“Take ye your goods and your cattle and all that ye have got from the Egyptians to serve

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the Lord in the wilderness. Haste ye forth from Raamses unto Succoth, for this night God hath freed Israel!"

Very unwarlike the Exodus must have looked on that balmy Spring night three thousand years ago.

The rays of the full moon cast a weird light on the strangest pilgrimage of history.

At its head the majestic Prophet with his tall gnarled staff, pointing the way to the moon-lit desert beyond the shadows of the great Avenue of Sphinxes.

Behind him a multitude whose vastness could only be guessed but was momentarily increased by country folk and their herds coming from many directions. Flocks of sheep and goats; long double files of camels, the immemorial ships of the desert; innumerable kine, driven reluctant from their Goshen pasturages; asses and mules, the colts trotting beside the mothers and snatching nutrition at the shortest halt; the Israelite children and their pets, playful lambs and kids whose hops, skips and jumps were very bothersome; here and there, a bobbing howdah showing where some rich Hebrew transported his folk behind curtains in camel-

back grandeur; the bed-ridden old women in their wagons; the vast mass of able-bodied men, women and children trudging along afoot, burdened with loads of gear.

The girl Miriam carried one of the biggest of these packs. She was good to the little ones and to the aged, helping start them on their way before taking up her burden. The glorious hope of new happiness mended her sorely stricken spirit, and even the dour Dathan seemed to share her curiously uplifted mood. . . . As for the gathered thousands of the freed people, they were laughing, crying, running and jumping in their joy. No exertion seemed too great, no sacrifice of home-leaving too much, in the ravishing prospect of liberty from their bondage.

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Dawn found the motley, variegated host struggling o'er the bare, curved slopes and sand hills that precede the declivity of the Red Sea.

Gayly hued and beautiful the pilgrimage was in the bright lights of the morning, stretching along many a mile in wavy irregular serpentine; the colorful costumes of the folks and the warm color tones of the animals set against

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background of yellow desert and intense blue sky! But the helplessness of it. . . . None knew whither he was going or what might hap.

A host of unwarlike people setting out into the desert! What folly, what mad tempting of Fate it appears!

There was need of the Wonder Worker, Israel's leader, who alone could give guidance.

The desert Prophet invoked the aid of Jehovah.

Before they made their second camp at Etham on the wilderness' edge, a dark cloud to the eastward revealed and set their course.

At night the same cloud flashed fire and gave them light.

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It would have been a quick journey across the northern neck of Suez to the land of Philistia which bordered their Promised new home of Canaan.

But what chance had they—yesterday's bond slaves—to withstand the proved prowess of the Philistines?

Canaan (or Palestine, as we now know it) would have to be entered far to the southeast by way of Sinai.

Were it possible that the shoals of the Red

Sea might be crossed, avoiding the warlike tribes farther up?

(Napoleon Bonaparte—the reader should be reminded—more than thirty centuries later made that difficult passage, though he nearly lost his life.)

Moses under God inclined their course until they found themselves opposite the westerly arm of the Sea.

The course must have seemed to those who knew the country stark madness! Behind them, rocky hills; to the north and south, natural avenues of attack in the stretch of beaches; before them, the seemingly impassable Red Sea. A natural trap! The children of Israel were cornered. . . . Or were they? . . .

· · · · ·
“And he made ready his chariot, and gathered before the great gates of Raamses six hundred chariots—and all the chariots of Egypt—and captains over every one of them.”

The tocsin sounded Pharaoh's charge.

For hours the soldiery had been massing for the expedition, and at last all was ready.

The horses ramped at the bits, the drivers held them back with taut muscles, the fighters armed themselves and leaped to the platforms.

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As the Pharaoh in his royal chariot at the front said "Go!" the primitive battle array of antiquity's mightiest kingdom hurtled itself out of the Avenue of Sphinxes and sped over the eastern sands in pursuit of the fugitive slaves.

Little recked they for spill or collision as on, on, they plunged in mad haste to make the objective! Wrecks here and there—even the grisly spectacle of a jumbled up lot of men and horses precipitated headlong down a sand cliff—did not halt the general mass. Speed, *speed*, SPEED! was the all-essential—speed to catch the fugitives before they could seek the refuge of the Wilderness' stony spaces. The broad track of the pursued lay in front. There was no mistaking the innumerable footprints. They had but to go on quickly, and the quarry would be theirs.

Rameses and all the soldiers bereaved in the terrible Tenth Plague exulted in their revenge. Not a man nor a man-child of the runaways should be spared until the full blood-lust was satiated!

.

Panic seized the Israelitish host at the awful sight of the deadly chariot army bearing down upon them. The appearance of Pharaoh in

arms could mean but one thing—their annihilation! They cried to Heaven in their extremity, many surrendered to black despair as if already lost, even the leaders quaked and trembled and bitterly regretted they had listened to the voice of Moses. Panic would have turned to indiscriminate flight, but there was nowhere to flee. The galloping horses of the Egyptians, thundering down the sands to the camp, would overtake the speediest runner.

A cry “Moses! Moses!” went up.

That venerable old man, with Miriam and Aaron, was standing on a point of land jutting into the water. Eyes shaded by his hand, he was gazing across one of the long indentations of the shore, towards Pharaoh’s approaching host. He was calm, but Aaron was frightened and Miriam was weeping.

Frantically the people crowded out toward the little peninsula, wailing, imploring, begging, praying the Prophet to save them. Thousands of hands were outstretched to him in agony. Crying children tugged for protection at their mothers’ skirts. The mothers’ sheer terror caused the children’s cries to be unheeded.

A tall dark man of saturnine cast pushed his way through the wailing throng and bearded

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the Prophet. It was Dathan, and his venomous words were like the serpent's stab.

“Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? For is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, Let us alone, to serve the Egyptians? Truly it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die here at their hands!”

The Prophet surveyed the man calmly, silently without deigning an answer. A minute, thus; then he lifted his face and arms to the sky as one in communion with his Maker. Glancing yet again at the oncoming army in the distance, he turned to the host of the people and proudly said:

“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord which he will show to you to-day!” He prophesied again:

“Fear and dread shall fall upon them! By the greatness of thy arm, O Lord, they shall be as still as a stone—till thy people pass over.”

Was it vaunting or was it prophecy? Or knowledge of Nature, and Nature's God?

Far down the beach, a barrage of yellow-red flames appeared, blocking the Egyptians' path. A south wind fanned the flames into

fantastic, mounting shapes, and rolled the black-gray smudge into the horses' faces. Pharaoh halted his chariot, and the army of the charioteers drew up behind him. Through the transparent orange-like fires, as the smudge cloud swayed this way and that, Pharaoh and his men could see the camp of Israel. But there was no way of passing the living death, and Pharaoh perforce stopped the advance, aghast at the strange barrage: when it did not shortly abate, he ordered rest and supper. . . .

Yes, it was evening, and the Israelites in their camp noticed an even stranger thing. The sky in the east had cleared, and the heavens towards the Egyptians were blackened. As night drew on, the pillar of cloud protected the children of Israel, whilst its flashes gave them light to see. The two hosts were sundered as if by mountain walls!

The Hebrews slept peacefully, awaiting the orders of their commander which would come just before the gray light of the early dawn.

For Pharaoh and his officers 'twas a restless and foreboding night, worn by unending arguments about the strange nature of the phenomenon and savage threats of what they would do on the morrow when it had passed. . . .

CHAPTER IX

DELIVERANCE OF THE SEA

ALL that night a strong east wind blew and gradually lowered the shoals. . . .

The treacherous Red Sea!

What secrets it could tell if its age-long waters were articulate! Of man's might conquered and God's power triumphant; of battle, sudden death, defeat and victory; of Napoleon himself almost entailed in 1798, whereat the course of modern times might have changed and even World War might have been averted; of peaceful yoking of Red and Mediterranean by Suez Canal, giving Britain the way of the Seven Seas! More sphinx-like than the sphinxes, more majestic in its pyramidal power than the Pyramids of Gizeh confronting it, its bosom carried the galleys that brought to Mediterranean littorals the wealth of Ormus and of Ind, the gold of Ophir, the frankincense of Arabia and the other precious things that pleased the divinities of Egyptian and of Jew:

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thus a peaceful beneficent Neptune, were not its wild heart untamed!

Like the awesome God-indwelling volcano of Mount Sinai on its jutting peninsula, the Red Sea's mercy was mysterious, its violence sudden and incalculable.

Man's might and boast were puny and vain beside it.

Only the old Prophet of the adjacent Horeb desert—he who had walked with God and divined divine Nature—knew aught of the riddle of its winds and waves. . . .

In that early dawn when the barrage betwixt the two hosts was slowly dissipating, Pharaoh and his captain made reconnoissance.

“See!” cried the monarch, pointing off in the distance. “These dogs of Israel are already girded and afoot. Gird ye quickly, yoke ye the horses and the chariots, for 'tis my decree that the people of Moses be blotted out this day!”

“It shall be done, O King of Kings!” replied the captain with low obeisance. “Even as the corn at the sharp edge of the reaping sickle, shall they be cut down. Your swift forces shall overwhelm them before yon eastern sun hath fairly lit their path!”

As soon as the brief preparations were completed, the Pharaoh, once again his bold impetuous vainglorious self, led the van. . . . Not a man of the twelve hundred warriors and charioteers doubted that instant victory would be theirs. . . . Scarcely a battle indeed, but a carnage that should satiate the vengeful blood lust! . . .

But Moses's look was toward the sea, where the waters had shoaled under the whipping of the night wind. The fury of Æolus was unabated. With each successive blast the waters raced out like a tidal bore, churning and foaming like veritable cascading walls! Miriam and Aaron were wonderstruck at the strange spectacle, the while Dathan and others of little faith continued to gaze northward at Pharaoh's army, giving themselves up as lost.

The Prophet's eye for a moment swept the nearer and the distant scene—the host of Israel, and the host of Egypt—as he cried: “Set ye forth!” The caravan of a people on the march was afoot for its journey. The herdsman had rounded up the cattle, the little ones and the invalids were in their wagons, the packmen and packwomen took up their burdens. . . .

Set forth—but whither?

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The people were already at the water's edge, Pharaoh's chariots about to thunder on them from behind, and the long strip of beach to the southward was devoid of refuge. Around Moses they gathered as they had the day before, huddled and frightened.

Moses raised his arms towards Heaven. "O Lord God, deliver thou us, even the deliverance of the Sea!"

He lowered his eyes to the boiling maelstrom in front of him, and stretched his right hand out over it.

Each side the central shoal the waters had parted till they seemed like a wall upon the right hand and a wall upon the left. Between them, the shallow place was rapidly drying in the first rays of the sun.

Veritably "the floods stood upright in a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea."

Moses turned to the fear-struck suppliants. Poised like a figure of Victory, he pointed with grand gesture to the path of safety.

"Fear not"—there was a triumphant note in his voice, albeit one of deep reverence—"fear not to pass through the deep waters—*for the Lord fighteth on our side!*"



A Paramount Picture.

The Ten Commandments.

"FEAR NOT, STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF JEHOVAH!"

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Almost in an instant the people saw the way that his gesture had indicated. Stupefaction at the almost unbelievable miracle of it succeeded grief and woe; then—as each realized that salvation was there before them—they broke into hosannahs and thanksgiving as they crowded all outlets to the Great Deliverance. . . .

The wide path across the shallows was now practically dry. It stretched, a broad orange-colored streak, clear to the farther rocky shore, and the marvel of it was that each side the waters still raged furiously, walling up mountain high and cascading in every kaleidoscopic hue of the rainbow. The long procession of men, women, children and their gear and cattle started through. In the center of that path of safety, they were hardly wetted by the cascading drops. The parted Sea indeed made walls of protection on either hand. But the Israelites walked on dry ground. . . .

At the far shore they clambered up the rocks. Easing the burdens from their backs, they helped up the cattle and the gear. And now burst forth the full pæan of rejoicing. Members of families hugged; stranger kissed stranger; some leaped and danced with joy, others

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raised songs of triumph until the rocky welkin rang with the glorious chant of a whole people offering up thanksgiving to God for a universal death averted. . . .

. . . But Moses, by no means chanting, was praying the completion of the miracle. From a rocky eminence over yonder he saw Pharaoh's host at last in motion. Here and there their chariots were digging into the sand made softer by the swirling waters. Now and again one of the chariots lost a wheel, putting its fighters hors du combat. But though the chariots drave heavily, still the most of them were coming on and on at a goodly speed, and it was only a matter of minutes when they would reach the part of the west bank directly opposite the parted Sea's open path. . . .

Glory be! The wind and weather were changing with the advancing sun, now nearly high in the heavens. The east wind had ceased to blow. In place of it, a mighty breeze came up out of the south. Moses saw the first part of the answer to his prayer. . . .

Plainly the host of Egypt were distraught, for they halted as they reached the scene of Israel's exit. Already the erstwhile dry path was wet with trickling streams. But Pharaoh

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fiercely urged them on. "Fear not this God of Israel," he shouted. "Follow and destroy them!" His command, sped through the host by all his lieutenants, was instantly obeyed. With his reckless courage he again led the way, this time adown the sea's roadway, and the other chariots likewise dashed in between the walls of water. . . .

Beyond the sea's arm on the rocky shore, faint-hearted Aaron, seeing the onrush, again believed Pharaoh triumphant. "Thou hast betrayed us," he cried to Moses, "for, behold, the Egyptians are upon us!" Miriam cowered again in rigid despair. Dathan spoke not, but if a look could have killed, his look of venomous hate directed toward Israel's leader would have been deadly. But the Prophet was unmindful of their reaction. Observing only the Sea and the encompassed host, he pointed their attention thither, again proudly saying:

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!"

Moses stretched forth his hand over the waters. . . . As the little group gazed spell-bound, the sea returned with terrible force.

The walls of water rolled down upon the roadway. In a few seconds Pharaoh and his

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men and his horses were struggling in the flood.

Momentarily the liquid avalanche—again like a great tidal bore, but this time from the south—descended upon them. Fighters lost their footing and grip, were catapulted from the chariots by the resistless advance. Others were kicked to death by the frantic choking horses.

The suddenness and fury of the return gave no chance even to agile swimmers. They were drowning, drowning, drowning at the bottom of the sea, weighted down by their armor, tossed hither and yon along the sea floor by each successive impact.

In the maelstrom above, the bodies of charioteers—ghastly and strangled—whirled about in circles. The tops of the chariots were no longer visible. Furiously the horses struggled for life, but at last they too were quiet. . . . The all-avenging Sea was the grave of all, all—even the mightiest captains and their steeds.

Could one have seen the final agony of the haughty Pharaoh, he must have acknowledged the eternal Justice that metes hell to the wicked and cruel.

For Rameses, none of the awe and homage of millions availed aught now! His precious

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armor, jeweled breastplate and golden greaves—the emblems of his royalty—but doomed him the more certainly. His Herculean strength was as the pygmy's. . . . The attempt to whip his steeds through the heart of the avalanche was bootless—like driving a tallyho across Niagara! Instead, he was hurled out bodily. His gigantic but strangling and o'erweighted frame was dashed against a jagged point of rocks where he died the double death of drowning and fatal wound: to his dying vision the Law of Jehovah loomed awful, inexorable.

.

The dead bodies of the Egyptians floating toward the shore, the still unquiet Sea that had swallowed Pharaoh and his chariots, told Israel that God reigned, to the executing of his judgments and the salvation of his people. A great awe fell upon the host which had now gathered around Miriam and Moses. Upraising their hands, they solemnly cried:

“The Lord is our strength and song, and he is become our salvation!”

Miriam led them forth with timbrels and with dances. “Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

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There was an ecstatic exaltation in the beautiful girl, a response to the high and holy passion of the moment, that marked her Prophetess, i.e., leader of the hearts and souls of the women.

Vivid, temperamental, with her own experience of the depths and heights, she could play upon feelings as upon a harp. The lovely sensuousness of her, the pagan charm that peeped through the piety, was an irresistible magnet. . . .

. . . But a heavy task confronted Moses. His, to be the practical statesman of the difficult desert pilgrimage. His—above all—to seek the abode of Jehovah upon Sinai and to transmit the Divine commands of their Deliverer to the people.

CHAPTER X

JEHOVAH SPEAKS

THE grandeur of Moses stands out the more we consider his work.

It is the fame of other great captains of history to have waged wonderful campaigns. For what? Rapine, death-dealing and destruction!

It is the fame of Moses, on the other hand, to have waged a peregrinatory campaign that built a Nation—the laws of States—in a sense, Civilization itself!

If one may compare the sacred with the profane, the labors of Moses may be likened to those of our heroic covered wagoners of the 1843-49 period who traversed thousands of miles of desert and wilderness in order to break ground for new communities on the Pacific shore.

Like those grand captains of the Western trek, to him the lives and safety of the Caravan were entrusted. . . . Greater than they, he was the first of the Pioneers!

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Food, water, defense, pilotage, religion, law and order: these essentials of the new life of nomadism were absolutely up to the Leader. Without him, the folk would perish!

With him, they had security and sustenance, and received the ordinances of the true God, the observance of which would enable their children and children's children to dwell together in settled society. For "man shall not live by bread alone." The Law of the Ages must be found and obeyed, else human Society becomes corrupt, anarchic, vile: the world perishes!

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"In the third month came they into the wilderness of Sinai and camped before the Mount, and Moses was with the Lord on the Mount for forty days and forty nights."

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The old Wonder Worker drew near to the Source of his strength.

From the cult of that Nature God (in which the wise Jethro had inducted him) he had derived the skill that outfaced the Nile wizards and the interpretation of natural signs that could foretell plague, flood or cataclysm.

He had met God, on the side of that very



A Paramount Picture.

MISS ESTELLE TAYLOR AS MIRIAM THE PROPHETESS.

The Ten Commandments.

mountain, in the Bush that burned and was consumed not!

He had wrestled with the Lord in the way, and the outer manifestation enforced the prompting of the Inner Voice that bade him rescue his brethren out of Egypt. All through the long struggle against Pharaoh, through the exodus and the deliverance, the inspiration of Jehovah had guided him, and now he was about to be initiated into the awful mysteries of His dwelling place and witness His dread workings that symbolized Nature's punishment of those who transgress the eternal Laws. . . .

“And the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountains smoking, and the sight of the glory of the Lord, were like devouring fire.”

Awed were the people as the Leader, staff in hand, mounted slowly step by step, up to the dread scene.

Panic-stricken by the fear of the fiery Sinai belching death upon them, they removed themselves and stood afar off. Far up the mountain could still be descried the now tiny figure of the Prophet, leaping crevasses, toiling over rocks or seeking foothold across a slippery incline. . . . Soon he turned the corner of a large

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rock face, and was lost to view. . . . The clouds above the Mount grew blacker. More frequent lightnings from the heavens lit up the pyramid of smoke with strange effect. Sinai cast up ashes and crimson flames. The roar of its belching seemed almost articulate with the expressed warning of the Deity. . . . Many fell on their faces, crying, "It is the voice of Jehovah!" As before the natural wonder at the Red Sea, the people worshiped the God and revered the Prophet.

. . . From the full fury of the scene of living death at the crater's edge, Moses sought refuge on a ledge backed by huge and almost vertical walls of solid stone. The storm cloud came nearer and burst into flame. Cowering against the rock, he prayed: "O God, reveal Thy will—and save Thy servant!" For momentarily it seemed that the fatal dart of the sky must transfix! But as the lightning broke in such awful proximity, it appeared to have letters of fire, and to the vision of Moses the words (in Hebrew) almost instantaneously formed and faded:

"THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME!"

. . . The flash ended with the terrific crash

of a riving thunderbolt, punctuating the hiss and roar of the Mount's eruption. Overpowered and almost stunned, wishing yet further revelation and yet holding out his hands against the impending death, Moses waited. . . .

The cloud came forward again. . . . A second flash broke with resounding accompaniment. . . . Again, Moses saw in it Jehovah's word:

“THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE!”

Moses the wise visionary, Moses the wonderworker, Moses the devoted follower of the God of Sinai, knew then that he had received answer to prayer. His first fear had changed into astonishment, and that into rapt ecstasy. He, the Prophet, was to deliver the will of the Lord! Praise to the Ruler who had decreed the eternal guidance!

. . . Moses upraised his hands in thanks to the Giver of All Good. Already the first Commands were engraved on the tablet of memory. But as Moses looked at the vertical rock towering beside him, the light shed by the Deity had outlined, shoulder-high, on the dark and seemingly immovable granite the perfect configura-

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tion of twin tables of stone! . . . The Prophet seized a sharp pebble from the stony débris at his feet, and started to carve. . . .

The wind gradually died, the lightning flashes ceased. The belching of the great Crater had temporarily subsided, only the tall pillar of smoke told of its subterranean menace.

As long as it was day, the old Prophet continued at his work.

Starting from the right-hand corner of the right-hand outline, he cut the letters one by one.

Each aleph, beth and gimmel slowly and accurately formed! It was infinitely slow and laborious work, not even a chisel but a random rock point his sole tool, whilst the skyey eagles circled round o'erhead in sheer puzzlement at the presence and actions of this strange human. But never did Moses intermit the task. After a few hours' rest in the night watches on his hard rock-bed of the granite ledge, he was up with the dawn and carving the words of the Deity on the solid stone face. . . .

Jehovah spoke, yet eight more times. . . .
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF
THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN. . . . He

came in the thunders and the lightnings. . . .
REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO
KEEP IT HOLY. . . . He was an effulgent
flame, but His face could not be seen.
. . . HONOR THY FATHER AND THY
MOTHER. . . . He limned the Red Command-
ment. . . . THOU SHALT NOT KILL. . . .
And put the brand of scarlet on the corrupter.
. . . THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADUL-
TERY. He set the foundation of personal
right and property. THOU SHALT NOT
STEAL. . . . He put the eternal stigma on ly-
ing to another's hurt. . . . THOU SHALT
NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS. . . . Lastly
forbidding jealousy and hate, the deadliest foes
of communal happiness. . . . THOU SHALT
NOT COVET!

Moses communed with God for forty days
and nights. He was as truly en rapport with
the Almighty during his laborious task as in
the brief times when his vision saw the Laws
in the sky. As at the earlier date of his first
revelation at Horeb, the Inner Voice was al-
ways prompting.

Came a day at the end of this long com-
munion when the lightning did strike! . . .

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The Tablets on the rock face had been completed. Moses's task was done. The spaces were filled, and the primal Rule of Life was finished. Not by lettered word this time, but by sheer bolt from the storm sky, was the personal mandate uttered!

A curvilinear lightning stroke that spared the Prophet clove into the canyon face and cleft the stone of the engraved Commands from their base, as cleanly as the work of a chisel! For a moment Moses stood astonished. Then reverently, with both hands, he removed the Twin Tablets from the rock wall, and, lifting his head toward the eminence of Sinai, prayed for guidance. The Mount was again in smoke and fire. Great storm clouds were gathering, and Nature menaced in one of her wilder moods.

“Get thee down from the mountain,” spoke the Mentor within. “For thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves! . . .”

CHAPTER XI

THE CABAL

POWER turns the head of its brief possessors, and this was the case of Aaron, Miriam and Dathan.

Moses whilst absent on the Mount had left his brother the high priest and his sister Miriam the prophetess, to direct the people. Dathan, the ever discontented and jealous was close to her, for—since they both had shared the visitation of Pharaoh's wrath—that saturnine figure had been her confidant.

The tinder to his spark was everywhere. It was easily found and quickly lit. Dathan went about among the people, fanning their grievances. Truly the ninety days of the Wilderness had been a long catalogue of hardships! For the wells and the sweet waters of the Nile tributaries, the bitter water of the desert; for the satisfying Egyptian fleshpots savory with leek and garlic, the unleavened bread and the manna; endless journeys under the scorching

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sun, the successive stages of which were marked by every sort of privation; no homes, no little comforts, only the seeming mythical hope of a Promised Land and the practice of an ascetic cult whose Deity never showed to mortals in visible semblance of wood or stone or metal!

Here they were at last, had been for many days, camped before the quaking mountain of this Fire God, to whom His Prophet had gone up and not returned.

What if the fires of his Creator had swallowed him? If he never came back—

Dathan whispered of certain Egyptian gods who were less exacting. Longings for the old Animal Worship were re-stirred. Jahveh (or Moses) had led them a rough way, but the sacred emblems of their old homes might bring good fortune. Visible at least they were, and warmly sensual in their rites—the people looked back with regret on the wild pagan carnivals, coarse but gratifying, that had alleviated the Bondage.

The rumor of Old Cults revived spread from camp to camp and from tribe to tribe. With fury and insistence it grew as it proceeded. It became a roar as the multitudes flocked to the seat of the Judge of Israel where Aaron

bore sway. The vast Congregation overflowed the natural canyon in which his dais was centered, and its temper was that of the Beast Mob, ugly and menacing.

“Away with Jehovah!”

“Seek we Gods of Pleasure!”

“This Moses has fled!”

“We know not, care not, what has become of him!”

“Up, make us gods that shall go before us!”

Dathan exulted. The outcome of his plottings had resulted just as he had planned. He counseled Miriam: “Forbear, gainsay them not—watch the event, and even thou mayhap shalt be their Queen!”

Aaron was sorely distrait. He knew the demand for idols violated the revelation from the God of Horeb that Moses had brought—knew he was the Prophet’s keeper and pledged to fulfill his Law: yet the Mob spoke in a mood that would not be denied.

“See!” cried Dathan, pointing to the front ranks where the idol-seekers already were brandishing weapons. “See,” he cried, “they seek thy life!

“Content them if thou canst, lest we three perish. Make but the one idol,” he said cun-

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ningly, "till the frenzy passeth, and all will be as before!"

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Very unmartyrlike was this Aaron. The gloss of Dathan decided him. Was it not the business of the Priest to minister what was wanted—and save his own skin? . . . Aaron appeased the people, saying:

"Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons and of your daughters, and bring them to me."

The multitude knew the meaning of that!

They were to have a golden god out of the material of their own jewelry. For three months had these precious articles been in their possession—the spoilage of the rich homes of the Egyptians—the idea of converting them from gauds into gods pleased them vastly.

Suiting the act to the word, they began stripping off the jewels from their bodies and outstretching their hands—loaded with the ornaments—to the dais platform.

Dathan was now the accepted lieutenant and spokesman of the High Priest. He was haranguing the crowds, telling them to keep the gems, but to turn in all the gold. Miriam, who admired him, joined in the occasion and

acted as collector. Holding high the choicest specimens of the booty—wonderful necklaces and bracelets and rings—she coaxed further donations by her lovely smile and her melodious-voiced persuasive speech. . . .

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The cabal against Moses and the Law was now in full swing. Although unwilling at first, the force of circumstances drove Aaron to be its chief minister. The same posture of events marked out the beautiful, voluptuous girl as its high priestess. Behind them stood the craftier Dathan, scheming hidden designs of his own to rule (through Miriam) the nomad State.

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The next scene in this nightmare of a nation gone astray after false gods is a wizard's cauldron—the melting tank of liquid gold—with the weird figures in chiaroscuro grouped around it at night. Aaron was there, with his mallet; Miriam, still seeking more gold to throw into the pot; Dathan, conniving and conspiring, the guiding spirit of the impiety.

Busily the hewers of wood stoked the fire, skillfully the goldsmiths used the pincers and

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paddles in handling the liquid, for approach to its sizzling, glaring whiteness meant death.

Ladled out in smaller pots, it was poured into forms. When cooled, the resultant plates had the rough semblance of animal head, neck, back, belly, sides and members.

The priest Aaron hammered them into more lifelike shape on the framework or skeleton which the carpenters had provided.

The image when completed was five feet high, gross in its beast caricature, withal possessed of a certain rude power.

The barrel-like body rested at an angle on rump and sprawling hind legs, and was up-raised at the front by enormously elongated fore shanks. The gaping mouth, black nostrils, and empty black holes for eye-sockets, imparted a brutish and vacant look. From the skull of the golden image rose a golden shield-shaped standard of its godhead, on which Aaron chiseled its name and potency in characters of Egyptian hieroglyph. . . .

While yet warm from the furnace and the blows of the hammer, Miriam was its devotee. The strange girl caressed its long flanks and rubbed its sprawling legs with the coils of her hair. . . . The sensuousness of the new wor-

ship overmastered her. . . . She was to be the female hierophant, the chief corybant rather, of the orgy that on the morrow would celebrate its coarse embodiment of the fecundative principle of Nature. . . . Dathan looked at her—in her newly started sense excitement—with hungry eyes. . . . His passion for the girl was intense, but it was second to his secret ambition. . . . What if love and ambition both had their fruition to-morrow! . . .

When the task was done, Aaron summoned all the false leaders of Israel to see his handiwork. Joy over the accomplishment of the Image was tumultuous. The men danced before the statue, attributed to it all the mercies that the all-wise unseen Jehovah had vouchsafed to them. “These be thy gods, O Israel,” they said, “which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt!” . . . Preparations for building an altar were already afoot, for Aaron made proclamation that next day there would be a feast to the new God.

The revelry was interrupted by the stalwart Captain of Israel, who had just heard of the nefarious enterprise. Joshua, true soldier of Moses, was astounded. He could hardly believe that the followers of Jehovah and his Prophet

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could so soon lapse into idolatry! "What meaneth this?" he demanded of them in a voice of stentorian rage.

The men regarded him with dark and scowling looks, but the high priest Aaron, pointing to the inscription above the new Deity, slowly and sonorously read:

MNEVIS

BULL GOD OF EGYPT

I that give increase of children
and herds, I that make ye
valiant in battle

"This is the new God that the People commanded, and which to-morrow we serve!"

Infuriated, the strong War Captain of Israel rushed to the Image, trying to wreck it with his stout battle-ax. "Seemeth it a small thing to you," he had cried, "that ye worship idols, forsaking the God that brought you up out of bondage?"

But fifty pairs of hands were upon him from behind, disarming him of his weapons, overpowering him, pinning him down so that resistance was fruitless. They bound Joshua hand and foot, and took him out from the Deity's outraged presence. . . .

In the night Joshua succeeded in loosing his bonds. He fled up the mountain to warn Moses of the coming corruption.

But all through the camps proceeded the bustle of herding animals for the sacrifice, of getting precious wine bags out of store, of food levy and of cooking fires, of washing, purification and new raiment, for was not the morrow the glorious Feast of the Golden Calf?

CHAPTER XII.

THE BULL GOD'S VOTARIES

“But the people had forgotten their God, and were set on mischief and corruption, and with noise of singing and clashing of cymbals, they stripped themselves—and bowed down and worshiped the Golden Calf.”

THE night fires had roasted the huge barbecues of meats supposed to be sweet savors to the nostrils of Mnevis. The instruments of primitive music were ready. The wine had been drawn into pitchers and jugs for pouring into the cups. Aaron and his acolytes were in sacerdotal raiment, and the people showed their new finery though they well knew there would be little use for clothes once the high jinks began.

The Calf was carried in state, high o'er the heads of the populace, by ten burly burden-bearers. The high priestess headed the fantastic processional.

A kind of loose cloak, fastened at one shoulder, swayed with her quick movements and gave ravishing glimpses of her gorgeous spangled

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kirtle and her finely molded limbs. Her glorious blue-black hair flowed in billowy tresses adown her back, even below her hips. On her bold and beautiful features there was a wanton expression, and her sapphire eyes gleamed with triumph.

“Bow down, bow down, abase yourselves,” cried Miriam, “to the great God of Increase!”

The corybantes all around her, slim dancing girls clad in little but waist cloths and breast bands, kneeling, bent their heads low to earth till the Idol (if god he was) saw naught but bare backs! Beyond the circle of the girls, most of Israel was flattened out before the Beast.

Fawning on the Calf, the “Prophetess” mounted part way of the ladder leading up to the low altar where the Idol’s progress had been halted that he might savor the odors of the cooking fires.

Turning, she partly knelt and, with hands uplifted in wide appeal, cried: “Arise! Drink of the winecup, sound the cymbals, beat the timbrel, for your Bull God cometh to his place of power!”

The people needed no urging. The prostrate host was up in a flash—all upstretched hands

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instead of flattened backs. The girls sounded the musical instruments, or eagerly accepted the wine that was proffered. Swains lifted their favorites on their shoulders, others exchanged public endearments, for the rule of the Bull meant that sex inhibition was banished! Slowly He was being moved to his high station on a jutting rock eminence, which had been carpeted with the skins of wild animals for his sacred bovine feet.

Up there a huge kettledrum was being pounded in herald of his approach. Aaron and Dathan—both elaborately robed—were up there too, waiting to receive the Deity. Miriam had found place on the front of the carrying platform that bore Him. One arm around the neck of the grotesque creature and the other outstretched to Aaron, she presented a picture of vivid and lawless beauty. . . .

.
The sense-hungry Beast Mob—fit devotee of the Mob Beast—was getting drunker and drunker. Men seized their girls like satyrs. The laughing, teasing trollops made but mock effort to resist. The queens of beauty were elevated in swings above the multitude. They were proud of their charms, reveled in the pro-

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miscuous kissing that greeted their ascent and descent. Foolish drunkards kissed the head, neck and feet of their common inamoratas. It would have been very funny if not so hideous and so tragic. . . .

. . . But up on Sinai a lonely old man was being hailed by one of his last followers. The old Prophet clutched the Tablets of the Laws in his two hands. Already he had been forewarned by God that the children of Israel were corrupting themselves. . . .

The stalwart, brown-bearded Joshua approached the descending Prophet. "There is a noise of war in camp," he said, pointing to the direction of the revelry.

"It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome. But the noise of them that sing, do I hear!"

The words of Joshua but confirmed Moses's fears. From his lofty eminence he could descry a swarming and a reveling down in the valley. From the tumult of it, the sound of barbaric instruments and of orgiastic chanting could be heard.

"Let us descend!" said the Prophet. "Methinks Heaven has already marked out idola-

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ters for destruction! . . .” Yes, old Sinai was quaking again, and the storm clouds were very black. . . .

The beautiful girl was in her triumph alongside the highly set up, flower-garlanded Golden Calf. The multitude were fascinated by her opulent beauty. Here was a prophetess that should reveal the full glories of the Bull! They abased themselves at her edict in groveling worship, but as they arose a dazzling sight met their drink-infuriated eyes!

For Miriam had unfastened the long cloak that partly hid her form, torn off the kirtle around her waist, and stood before them the naked mate of the Bull!

There was not a stitch on her save the narrow hip cloth, two swelling breastplates and a necklace. Gloriously her opulent limbs, grandly framed torso, strong white arms, and head with its crown of blue-black hair stood revealed. She was what the Greeks would have dubbed Cytherea, the Romans, Venus, and we of modern times, Fleshly Love!

The nude girl took a brimming winecup from an attendant. Pouring half of it down the wide black mouth of the Beast, she drank the rest.

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Fire was in her eye, the lust of the flesh inspired her. Turning to the outstretched hands and bodies of the Israelites, she cried in dulcet, coaxing tones:

“Come, worship ye the Golden God of Pleasure, for the god of Israel heareth not, neither doth He see!”

She footed it in a wild measure before her Deity, lost to sense of self, expressive only of the abandon that would submit—and clutch eagerly after—the embraces of the He-Master.

It was the signal for a sex-dance the obscenity of which has not been exceeded in history. Men and women joined in figures interpretative of the orgy of lust that was to follow.

No sex-imagination of that primitive people was beyond what they tried and did, and ever in the lead was Miriam, fawning upon her Beast, rubbing its legs and flanks, contorting about it in her ecstasy. As the dance died down she was stretched unconscious at its feet, supine in her abandonment, as helpless as the worm that has spun its cocoon!

Said the revelers: “She has wedded the Bull God!” gazing with awe upon the hypnotic power of the Golden Beast. Soon again the

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tide of mirth and lustfulness was in full swing. . . . The dancers broke into smaller groups. . . . Mate sought mate. . . . In many a corner swains poured sweet nothings into sweethearts' ears, and the queens of beauty were being pulled down from their lofty eyries to fulfill an Israelitish holiday. . . .

The cunning Dathan forbore to approach Miriam in her ecstasy or to touch her when supine. He knew the animal-ward passion must spend itself, and she must seek a human lover. . . .

At last, with returning consciousness, the girl raised her eyelids. She saw her adored Calf, raised herself to a sitting position where, in the aftermath of ecstasy, she could fondle it. . . . Dathan slowly approached. . . . He laid one hand upon her unresisting shoulder, and said:

“The People shall ever worship thy Golden God and make thee Queen—with me, thy Minister!”

The lover gradually entwined his other hand about her form. He was warm and pleasant, even hot to the touch. Right hand clasped left hand around the firm, voluptuous mid-body.

With a gesture of yielding, Miriam clasped

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the head of the king-like lover. She raised her full lips in the motion to kiss. . . .

But Dathan, looking at her hand, had seen a sight that suddenly palsied every natural instinct.

Instead of meeting her lips, he flung his head back to avoid them! His face was white, and his members were shaking.

Unclasping the girl quickly, he pointed to her fingers and in a voice of doom said as he rose ghastly and shivering:

“Behold thy hands!

“Thou art become a leper—Unclean! Unclean!”

CHAPTER XIII

DISASTER

“Who is on the Lord’s side? . . . And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.”

THE revelation came so unexpectedly—the finder of the stigma so quickly made his escape—that Miriam could not realize what happened. Her sickly and vacant smile looked on the knots of revelers whom she had incited to their recent frenzies. The gaze lowered to her hands, and slowly the awful truth of Dathan’s word infiltrated to her brain.

The backs of both were scarred with the disfiguring white patches of leprosy!

The Egyptian asp head of her three-ringed golden bracelet pointed directly to the sores. There were six or eight of them on each hand, unmistakable, foul, the first eating away that precedes the ravaging of the incurable malady on vital parts.

Leprosy! . . . The girl’s smile froze into agony. . . . The Blood Taint of moral and physical dirt. . . . Sobs shook her frame. . . .

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The death-in-life, the slow and lingering punishment of Nature to them that are defiled! . . .

The revelers looked different now. . . . They were obscene satyrs and wantons, pursuing an orgy of disease and death. . . . Through leprous fingers held out as if to repel their lustful carnival, Miriam saw them shudderingly. . . .

The girl, who had been couched on a lion hide before the front legs of the Calf, staggered to her feet, wrapping her mantle about her to conceal the shame of her nakedness. . . . The Beast too looked different. . . . Gone was his golden majesty, gone his symbolism of the Procreative power. . . . He was an ugly and soulless hulk, a puppet and a caricature, vile implement of a vile cult. . . . The stabbing thought of her own tragedy smote the stricken girl again.

She sought refuge, escape, anywhither—to flee her priestess rôle, to escape from the Bull God orgy herself had wrought. . . .

. . . But an extraordinary change had come upon the revelers. Caught as in the very moment of abandoned passion, they crouched, or lolled, or stood embraced, like beings turned to stone! The faces of the hussies on the swings, of the girls and lemans ensconced in high cran-

nies of the canyon, seemed petrified by fear. In the general scene below, every mouth was agape, eyes seemed protruding in fixed white horror from sockets!

. . . The spectacle that had wrought this extraordinary change was the finely outlined but distinct figure of a venerable old man, appearing at the top of the canyon a few hundred feet above and behind the station of the Calf.

“Moses! Moses!” The words flew from tongue to tongue till all knew and were afraid.

“It is the prophet Moses returning from Sinai!”

The venerable old man was carrying the Tablets of the Law.

· · · · ·
“Save thy People, I beseech thee! For they have done an abomination—and Aaron hath made them naked unto their shame!”

Thus a friend of Joshua's, an eye-witness of the orgy, had implored, as panting for breath he had run up to Moses and Joshua, who had reached the lower flanks of the mountain.

Far down the steep slopes he pointed to the Calf and the dancing.

As they clambered down the rocks, every step brought the view nearer.

The old Leader who had braved Nature's fury for forty days and nights to win of the Law and engrave it on stone, saw the Law of the true God, Nature's stern inhibitions against wickedness, outraged during the very making!

He knew—Miriam also knew now, the people were soon to know it—that the penalty was inevitable.

“Woe to thee, O Israel! Thou art undone, for thou provokedst thy God to wrath!”

The wages of Sin is Death!

For Jehovah was preparing his vengeance. The heavens said it, and the wind—as mighty as that which divided the Red Sea—was beginning to exert its unseen power to rising hurricane. . . .

.
A terrible figure he stood at the head of the canyon. The down-sweeping wind impelled the words of his voice, making them articulate to the farthest part of the assemblage:

“Ye have made you gods of gold. Therefore, ye are not worthy to receive the tablets of the one God!” . . .

With a powerful gesture he cast the Tablets forward and brake them beneath the Mount.

. . . The Holy Commands slithered far down the mountain, fell at the feet of the Golden Calf, and fragments of them fell on the people down below. . . . Moses's anger was hot. . . . To the Bull Calf's votaries below, it seemed as if the anger were a devouring flame. . . .

. . . Yet one crawling figure mounted the heights to his eyrie and lay half-swooning at his feet.

She recovered herself and raised piteous, half-scarred hands to her brother.

“ 'Tis I, Miriam,” the figure cried.

“Cleanse me, I pray thee, for I have worshiped idols and become a leper!”

Moses helped her up to the eminence right back of the Golden Calf. “Thou hast sinned, God alone can adjudge the penalty!” He raised his hand to high Heaven, as if to invoke the judgment of a just God. . . .

.
Again the bolt from the blue struck, riving the Golden Calf by its forked sheet lightning and plunging its trunk-severed head among the votaries below! In passing, the stroke felled Miriam, leaving her a lifeless corpse! The hideous death-in-life was ended. God in His

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mercy had snapped the tie of the Death Spectre, giving her surcease of pain. . . .

• • • • •
“And all Israel that were round about fled at the cry of him, and fell upon their faces.”

The wind had become a devouring hurricane!

With it were mixed the winged lightnings, and the fiery, hissing lava rolling down from another shoulder of the mountain into the middle of the canyon!

Far in a corner Aaron and Dathan were fending off the crazed Bull Worshipers who sought their lives. . . .

Aaron fled to his brother. . . .

For Dathan, there was no escape.

The men with their weapons came at him angrily. “Thou hast brought destruction upon us, with thy gods of gold!” Some poked him with their cudgels, others sliced him with their sharp knives. He fell, a victim of ambition to falsely rule. . . . His jealousy of the Prophet of God was stilled forever. . . .

• • • • •
Moses knew that he had triumphed. But there was no triumph in the eye of the Law-giver. His sister Miriam lay dead at his feet. His brother Aaron was a beggar for mercy and

a fugitive. Thousands of the recalcitrant people lay cold in death at the foot of the dis-severed statue, victims of the lightning bolts, the searing ashes and the cyclone. He knew that the stubbornness of the survivors would keep them for forty years in the Wilderness, till a new generation should grow up of greater courage and better mood to fight! Knew, too, that he must die and be buried on Mount Pisgah, without obtaining possession of the beloved Promised Land:

“And the dark rock pines, like tapers tall,
Over his bier to wave,
And God’s own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave,—

“In that strange grave without a name
Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall burst again, O wondrous thought!
Before the Judgment Day—

“And stand with glory wrapped around
On the hills he never trod,
And think of the strife that won our life
With the incarnate Son of God!”

’Twas a hard and strait way, the path of Jehovah’s righteousness, but he had followed it, faithfully, ever since he had cast aside the

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Egyptian priestly vestments to seek the God of the desert places and the still, small voice!

He had brought Law and Justice into the world with the high and holy affiliation; had redeemed a nation of bondmen, and engraved the Eternal Laws of our social being. Ineffaceable, inexpugnable they were; for though he had smashed them on the heads of the offending people, they were graven on his heart and conscience, and could be graven on stone again. Jehovah, at his plea, would turn from the destruction of the whole people, would show Himself in mercy and lovingkindness! Because, to every one that repenteth, the gate of return is open, and there is no vilest sinner but can make his peace with God! . . . His ways are past finding out, yet all His paths are peace. . . . The unconquerable soul, attuned to the good-loving Spirit of the Universe, can confront Heaven above or Hell below with equanimity. . . .

. . . We must leave Moses at the sorry task of gathering together the loyal remnant of Israel. Most of the idolaters perished. The others repented, and were forgiven. The Bull Worship vanished from the popular rites



A Paramount Picture.

"IT'S THE WORD OF GOD, REMEMBER THAT, DAN"

The Ten Commandments.

through the dread memory of Heaven's vengeance. . . .

The last one sees of it is the Idol dethroned
and the late votaries of the Bull sunk in death
for their flaming Sin. . . .

CHAPTER XIV

IS IT THE BUNK?

** * * And the Lord gave unto Moses * * * two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. * * * And Aaron said * * * Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. * * * And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a Molten Calf; and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

** * * And it came to pass, as soon as Moses came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the Calf, and the dancing; and Moses's anger waxed hot * * * and he took the Calf which they had made, and burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder.*

** * * And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. * * **

“ALL that’s the BUNK, Mother!

“The Ten Commandments were all right for a lot of dead ones—but that sort of stuff was buried with Queen Victoria!”

The speaker was a nervous and energetic youth, facing a severe-lipped little mother and a “great big kid” of a matter-of-fact brother,

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across the parlor table of a San Francisco home giving into a carpenter shop. Between them lay a large family Bible open at mid-Exodus. . . .

The happenings of this modern story, affecting the lives of six persons who each to his or her own way of thinking loved or hated or ignored the ancient Commandments, took place in the years following the world cataclysm.

They were ordinary folks, not the mighty nor fashionable of the earth. The little home was severely simple. The regular Sunday afternoon rite of Bible reading was in progress, and Dan McTavish found it a pest! But for it, he might have been enjoying a game of pool at Kelley's.

His brother John, in listening to the chapters from Exodus, has heard a fascinating romance and shows it in his face. But Dan, nervous, impatient, fiddles idly with the fringe of the funny old-fashioned table cover till he can no longer hold in, then bursting forth: "BUNK! That sort of stuff was buried with Queen Victoria!"

"It's the word of God, Danny," replied his mother, Martha McTavish, severely. She was small but impressive, vital and Old School in

her rigid faith, the blood of a long line of Covenanters flowing in her veins.

“It’s the word of God, Danny,” repeated the Bible-loving mother. “Ye’ll go a long way without it, and yet ye’ll come short of what ye seek, for the foot of the wicked is upon the quicksand and death and destruction shall be their portion. Remember that, Dan.”

“Your eternal Bible readings will drive me dotty, if that’s the bad end you predict!” replied the thoroughly exasperated Dan.

“Better study—and obsairve—it now than burn in brimstone in the hereafter.”

“Oh, this is too much, you harp and din this into us every day, make Sunday afternoons a nightmare with eternal Bible readings, and for what?” Dan McTavish’s voice rose almost to a shout. He was getting thoroughly worked up. “For a pack of foolish tales about the Jews and a lot of old Commandments that haven’t anything to do with to-day. The Ten Commandments can go plumb to H—. As for the Golden Calf, here’s mine!”

A spirit of devilish mockery seized the youth of twenty. Standing up, he suspended his California watch charm from a shelf; below it, up-ended a lighted cigarette on an impromptu in-

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cense burner that was just a dinner spoon; sank to his knees, with folded hands, and mumbled to Lord Gold Piece an unintelligible prayer, in ridiculous caricature of the Covenanter worship.

“The Children of Israel can have their Calf of Gold or their Jahveh, whatever they like,” he said, getting up. “My only God is the golden eagle, the real yellow, milled fellow that can make us rich and happy—get him I will, I don’t much care how; the other God you have brought us up on probably doesn’t exist.” . . .

“Silence!” cried Mrs. McTavish, into whose wan cheeks a slow red anger had crept. “This is my house, and ye’ll not blaspheme God in it—pray God, yourself have not committed the Unpardonable Sin and been damned eternally! Now go!” She stood and flung open the door, her other hand extended and finger pointing the exit out into the rain. Mother McTavish was blazing.

Dan, startled and partly cowed, snatched up his cap, pulled up his coat collar and departed. Martha McTavish had a way with her at times. She had brought Dan and John up in the “strait and narrow,” had slaved for them

as the sole provider after her husband's death and had received their implicit obedience to her Auld Kirk ideas until the schools and the newspapers and new fangled book learning (as she expressed it) had "spoiled the lads."

Dan, gay, insouciant, was the open rebel. John, the steady-going, adhered to family ideals, but without bigotry. He couldn't be an inflexible Covenanter if he tried. And so when fiery Dame McTavish cooled down and the red of anger left her cheek he remonstrated:

"You can't make people love God with fire and brimstone, Mother. You've been trying to make Dan fear God, not love him."

CHAPTER XV

MARY LEIGH

THE sportive brother sought his evening meal in a wagon lunch-room where the young 'Frisco chaps of his ilk often consorted. Dan was already a mixer and a hail-fellow-well-met. He knew every "copper," and the boss of the local ward already had an approving eye on him. In the lunch wagon was a pal with whom he at once fell into eager talk. Boy-like, he let his coffee cool and left his sandwich untasted until he had devoured the district's word-of-mouth news.

His back to it, Dan's frugal repast stood on the narrow counter of the lunch car before an open window.

A young girl, wet and cold, carrying in her arms a woebegone little terrier, passed along the curbing outside and sniffed hungrily at the inviting odors of frying frankfurters. Our heroine, Mary Leigh by name, with a kind of despairing hope, felt in her pockets for "chicken feed." Two pennies, not even a thin dime!

She looked momentarily to a group of young

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“sheiks” under the street corner awning whom she had just passed. They were at their regular Sunday afternoon rite of sidewalk conversation and ogling. Several had winked at her, one had accosted her: “Sweetie, come take a walk!” while the rest had guffawed. She had fled by. “Ugh!” A wave of disgust came over her in the momentary backward look.

Not a sheik there but would stake her to a meal and all the fixings! A waif, but decent, Mary mentally recoiled from their dirt. Just then her wistful eyes espied the open window and the sandwich.

She crept rather than walked to it, her eyes now wolfish and her gums slavering. “Sh-h-h! Tiny,” she admonished the little dog trembling with excitement in her arms. Taking a firmer grasp on Tiny with her left hand, she showed a white, wan little face just above the edge of the window. Her right hand was stealthily extended to the plate. As she saw the back-turned Dan still engrossed, the right hand covered the sandwich and hurriedly withdrew. Then Mary ran, ran as fast as her limbs could carry her.

“Stop thief!”

Dan had turned just in time to see the

emptied plate and a little figure scurrying off. "By golly, a gal stole yer sandwich!" yelled the second lunchman, dashing out of the door into the misty storm. Not he to stand idly by whilst customers are riffled! Tearing up a furious racket and rapidly collecting a crowd of pursuers, the catapulting lunchman followed the fleeing Mary across the Municipal Center with shouts and yells for the police.

Laughing, Dan followed the chase. "'Tain't the sandwich," he told his pal, "but just to see the face back of it!" He was egging on the pursuers now, outdistancing the heavy-footed. "Come on, folks, how about a little pep? Run like Sam Hill for law an' order. . . . By gemini, we'll need another 'Frisco vigilance committee yet!"

The girl (despite her hunger) was as quick and sharp-set as Dan himself! Speeding to the shack-built area west of upper Market Street, she turned a corner and saw salvation in the entrance of a carpenter shop with the friendly sign:

WALK IN

She crouched on the small open porch a second or two, shaking off the wet, then, hearing the increasing cries and footsteps along the street, answered the invitation, walked in and closed the door behind her. 'Twas just time. The crowd whirled by and out of our picture, having lost the scent. Through the door Mary could hear their retreating racket down the street. Then all was still. . . .

The place in which Mary found herself was the McTavish carpenter shop, though, of course, she had no means of knowing her hosts. It was messy, but well lighted and warm, and through a half-door at the back Mary could see a living room with the table set for supper.

Presently a sturdy young man who looked to be about twenty leaned over the boarding and gazed at the queer visitant, one arm hugging the terrier and the sandwich still in her right hand.

She was pretty, whoever she was—pretty, though bedraggled!

Sturdy John McTavish came out into the carpenter shop. They faced each other. He was puzzled and smiling, she debating to devise a yarn and finally deciding to “make a breast of it.”

“I haven’t eaten since yesterday!” said Mary breathlessly. “And as I was passing Dugan’s lunch wagon a ‘hot dog’ ran out and bit me!”

She held out the sandwich to show him, her eyes wistful and her face in a brave little comic smile as if to say: “Could you blame me?”

John looked at her with tenderness. So young and so pretty and in such rotten luck!

“I’ve been out of work for five weeks,” she continued, “down to my last copper, and Tiny here hasn’t had any more than I’ve had. Mary Leigh is my name, really and truly;” adding ruefully, “If it hadn’t been for a mean step-father up in Marysville, where I come from, I’d never lit out and sunk to be a ‘lady bum’—”

“But you’re not!” replied John earnestly. Too shy to pat her, he gently stroked Tiny, who seemed grateful for the caress.

“Come with me,” said John to the girl, “and we’ll see what we can do.” Opening the small door, he escorted her into the living room where Mrs. McTavish was carrying in the things for the home meal.

“This kid hasn’t a cent in the world, Mom!” was the way John put it. “Won’t you invite

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her to stay for supper and give her a bed to sleep in?"

Martha McTavish's blue eyes softened. She scrutinized the "kid" carefully through Bible-reading "specs," and when she had taken them off her eyes there was more than a suspicion of moisture.

"Certainly she can stay!" said Mother McTavish. She gave the girl an enfolding hug. John had appointed himself custodian of the little terrier, which snuggled in his arms. The waif was removing her hat and shabby coat, and there was joy in her face.

About this time the girl-chase exhausted itself and Dan remarked to his pal he guessed he'd stop at the house a minute on his way back.

"Wait for me while I get my coat. Mom threw me out to-night, so I won't be long!" But Stevie Bohannon (that was his pal) had an unexpectedly long wait under the soaking eaves!

As Dan entered the carpentry shop looking for his overcoat, he was met by John, his face aglow, and saying: "Before you leave home, Danny—let me show you what the storm blew in!" He led the unwilling Danny into the din-

ing room. Mother McTavish wasn't there, but Mary was.

The confronting of Mary and Dan was a ludicrous moment. Mary would have liked to sink through the floor, John was more mystified than ever, but Dan saved the day by a bit of byplay. Looking reproachfully at Mary, he pointed to the solemn framed Commandment on the wall behind her:

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!

He took down the outraged law and replaced it with "its picture to the wall." All three laughed. Mary and Dan shook hands, and in the mutual meeting and explanations Dan, Mary and John became firm pals.

"Nobody believes in those Commandment things nowadays," said Mary, pointing up to the panel with a wink, "and I think Elinor Glyn's a whole lot more interesting!"

Mother McTavish, bearing in the last dish, interrupted the "pal-ing."

"John, you and the young lady may come to supper," she said pointedly, eyeing the returned prodigal severely.

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“Come on, Danny,” appealed John. “Tell Mom you’re sorry!”

Their new sense of palship was so strong, the girl so attractive, the hot viands on the table so tempting, all combined to break down Dan’s defiance. He made the due apology, and all four sat down to table. . . .

CHAPTER XVI

MARY FINDS A HOME

THEY sat at the little round table: Mother, nearest the kitchen; then, the faithful John; next, Mary, in a huge breakfast robe the boys had lent her; farthest, Dan, with careless coat collar still upturned. But before "the eats" could be attacked, Martha McTavish raised a warning hand. "Grace before supper!"

Four heads bowed as the Mother supplicated Heaven, yet two pairs of eyes were open and roving.

"... And bless the Stranger within our gates," prayed Mother McTavish, with the touch personal. "Guide her feet in the strait and narrow path!" The roving eyes of Dan and Mary sought each other, exchanging a wireless. The little advocate of Glyn and the defier of Moses seemed to say to each other sans words: "We-e-ll, this IS the bunk!"

Mother McTavish straightened up, opened her lids, and looked around (as pious old ladies have a habit of doing) to note whether the

countenances were appropriately reverent. Dan had frozen into passivity, Mary was meek and lamb-like, and John was grave too. All right!

“We’ll be very glad to have Miss Leigh make her home with us until she finds work,” said Martha McTavish, thus formally approving Mary’s entry into the household.

A bright little trick like Mary Leigh—full of fun and joie de vivre, slangily clever, yet warm-hearted, and already with the allure of enchanting features and lithesome form budding into ripeness—would certainly brighten up any dull home!

But to the two brothers she was a creature of delight, and adoration found many means of expression. ’Twas “Mary this!” and “Mary that!” whenever there was a moment to be spared from square or foot rule, adze, chisel or handsaw. In fact, the home circle revolved around the ex-waif, who was so helpful and affectionate to the mother, Martha, that she did not dream of crossing the boys’ attentions. And—miracle of miracles! even Dan “stood for” the boresome religious readings, the family prayers, and the other rites of this Old

School "Bible family." Only, Dan once forgot.

Because one Sunday afternoon a few months later showed what an astonishing effect laughing brown eyes can have upon a household! Dan was slicked up, and John likewise. A certain extremely preoccupied air might have been noted about the sturdy brother. He was in his "Sunday best" of solid black and was evidently treasuring something, a tiny object he often took out of his vest pocket and as frequently replaced. He had evidently been on a trip to the florist's too, for a neat nosegay reposed in a glass on his chiffonier.

Nervous and forthright Dan was with Mary in the carpenter shop. They had found a little old victrola and a bunch of records with a fox trot on top.

"Oh, let's have a dance!" said Mary, her brown eyes sparkling and her face roguish and eager.

The delighted Dan put on the fox trot, started the machine, and swung into his little partner's inviting arms.

They trotted up and down the floor to the music, his arm firmly around her; hers, that should have touched his shoulder, encompassing his neck and caressing his glossy locks.

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The fire of mutual passion seized them with the bodily rhythm. Their faces came closer and closer. Dropping the grip of the other swinging arms they embraced and kissed—a long, mouth-to-mouth kiss that sealed their love.

“Mary!”

It was the voice of John calling from within the house. That stiffish cavalier had determined to plunge, instead of delaying, to know his fate. He had the tiny white object and the bouquet, and with the former he was comparing a torn bit of newspaper “ad” which read:

THIS RING ONLY \$2.00 A WEEK.

John compared lovingly the tiny stone in the casket with the description and cut of it in the paper.

“Mary, I’m crazy about you!” Dan had been saying. “Only I haven’t got the nerve to tell you what I’ve been thinking!”

She wanted to hear more, for every fiber of her being responded to his magnetic touch and his acted but unphrased love; but she could not, for John was calling. She slipped away to the half-door, where John with his tokens

was standing on the other side of it. Rather awkwardly, he presented her with the bouquet.

“Why, Johnny,” exclaimed Mary softly, “these are orange blossoms—and orange blossoms mean a wedding!”

John bridled and glowed. Yes, his sign language was being understood. “They’re from a man who’s crazy about you,” he went on fervently, “but hasn’t got the nerve to speak!”

(But why was Mary glancing back to Danny now and again?)

“He loves you, Mary,” continued John, “and wants you to marry him—but he doesn’t know if you care.” ’Twas just as near a direct proposal as John felt he could manage. Unable to say more, he seized Mary’s hands.

The girl, returning the handclasp, turned her head squarely and looked at Dan. Nerves, probably. Was embarrassed by another’s presence. Again looking at John, she said: “I think he’s just wonderful!”

John hurriedly withdrew a hand and fumbled for the ring, which he tried to place on Mary’s finger. A look of consternation dawned on her face. Holding back the proffer, “Why didn’t Danny give it to me, himself?” she asked.

At the fateful words, John saw it all. Not

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his to destroy Love's idyl, though he had no share of it. So Mary loved Dan, and Dan loved Mary.

He signaled the approaching Dan by finger on lip not to give him away. Then, as the sportier brother came and put his arm around the girl's waist, John said, with oddly twitching voice, as he displayed the ring:

"Danny, I told Mary that you didn't have nerve enough to give it to her—but she wouldn't take it from me!"

The ring having been finally accepted, the couple were in each other's arms now. They had almost forgotten John entirely—John, who was ruefully studying the clipping again and wondering about the payments, for it was he who was to "pay the freight" on his brother's engagement ring!

Theirs to renew the dance and look forward to a life of unalloyed happiness; his, to be the lonely bachelor, for John knew that Mary was the "only girl" and there never would be another in his life. . . .

.
Any of my readers that were raised in old-fashioned surroundings know the stress that was laid on Sabbath holiness. Not a worldly

work nor amusement was allowed to desecrate the day. Even walking in the fields was taboo; likewise, "idle reading," "profane music," fun of any kind, and noise. Lest the following incident should seem to be exaggerated, 'twere well to remember that a member of the Auld Kirk, coming to America from a primitive Highland community, perpetuated the strictest of these taboos.

Imagine, then, the horror of Martha McTavish, returning from a religious meeting, to hear in her own home the blare of the "Missouri Sunday Blues" sundering the circumambient quiet and to see the hugging Dan and Mary trotting up and down the carpentry floor to its jazzy strains!

Martha McTavish's righteous anger was speechless. She sought the Holy Book, opened it to page and verse of the dread prohibitions:

** * * unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me.*

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD THY GOD in vain.

IV. REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY.

CHAPTER XVII

MARTHA'S RAGE AND DAN'S COUP

. . . MARTHA MCTAVISH took the open Book to the revelers, and with accusing finger pointed to the Commandments. Both shamefacedly stopped, though Dan protested: "I say, Mom, it was only a little harmless dancing."

"Dancing!" retorted Mother McTavish, finding speech. "How dare ye desecrate the Lord's Day in my house?"

"Dan, you've broken five of the ten divine Commandments already—dishonored your Mother, violated the Sabbath, flouted the name of your Creator, bowed down to a Graven Image, and set up Mammon above your Maker! God will punish this house if you stay here—you've been a wicked son and most ungrateful.

"It is best, I'm thinking, that you make your departure now—TO-DAY—and not come back!"

"Oh, don't say that," begged Mary, intervening impulsively. "Please, don't blame him,

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Mrs. McTavish—it was my fault. I asked him to put on the dance records!”

For the first time Mother McTavish gazed at the offending stencil. With disgust she read the caption:

“I’VE GOT THOSE SUNDAY BLUES”

(The Missouriians)

C.B. 486

then, picking the record off the Victrola, dashed it in pieces against the work bench.

John, entering, saw the act as he had heard the last words of her denunciation. He laid his hand gently on his mother’s arm and said in a quiet voice:

“Mother, there’s nothing anywhere in that Good Book against having a little wholesome fun on Sunday!”

Martha McTavish stiffened. Somehow she felt beaten, with the three young people, including even her goody boy, opposing her. The situation drew a tear from her unrelenting old eyes.

“If my own sons,” she said with a breaking voice, “prefer to violate the Sabbath with an unbeliever—rather than to keep it with me—it’s time for me to go!” Mother McTavish

turned to her hat and coat on the rack and started to put them on. But Mary again intervened.

“Mrs. McTavish,” said the girl earnestly, “this is your home, and I’ve no right to make you unhappy. If any one goes it will be me!” Mary started upstairs to her room, but Dan on the stairs intercepted her; after they had exchanged a few words Mary went for her things.

Now Mother McTavish again was removing her street wear while John tried—very gently—to explain his point of view. Dan meantime was in a furious bustle about the house. ’Twas evident he was under strong excitement and up to something. Soon Mary came down, bonneted and coated for the street, carrying her little belongings in a satchel. Then John spoke, gravely and strongly:

“*Mother, do you think you’re giving God a square deal—when you turn this kid out in His name?*” ’Twas a question that should have arrested the veriest bigot, of whatever creed.

But its effect was lost as Dan, triumphant in defeat, leaped into the room and, taking Mary’s hand protectingly, said:

“I’m not going to let you go alone, Kid! *We’re going out right now and get married—*

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and we'll have our own home, play our own Victrola—and dance every Sunday until h—freezes and then, we'll dance on the ice!"

The Auld Kirk mother was too astonished for words, while John's face showed that he—much as he loved his mother—admired their colossal grit.

"Yes, Mary and I are going to be married right now," Dan reiterated, "and we're going to live our own life, in our own heathenish way!"

"You've been wonderful, Johnny," said the girl to the stay-at-home brother. "And when you fall in love some day, promise that you won't forget me!"

John promised—with a deeper meaning she was to understand in that unknown and mysterious Future to which the Eternal Law was leading these four individual human wills.

The old woman and the girl parted in kindness. Even Dan and his mother softened at the last, friendly in disunion. But as Dan seized his hat and coat and drew Mary to the door, he launched back a Parthian shaft in which there vibrated a triumphant note:

"Johnny, we're going to LIVE; we'll break all ten of your old commandments, and we'll

finish rich and powerful, with the world at our feet—

“While you, Johnny, will keep your Ten Commandments, and you’ll finish just where you are now—a poor carpenter!”

They were gone. John looked after them, wistful. Dan had the girl, and he would have the riches and power so he said. ’Twas a habit of Dan to get almost anything that he wanted.

“I guess being a carpenter is just about all I’m good for!” said John bitterly.

Mother McTavish, who had been strangely silent during the last part of the domestic storm, raised an enfolding arm to her sturdy son’s shoulder: “John, dear, some mighty fine men have been carpenters!” she said, her eyes seeking the portrait of the Nazarene. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

INTERLUDE: EAST OF SUEZ

WHILST Dan and Mary are embarking on their great life adventure sans the religion (or rebinding) that would tie them down amid the inhibitions of the Ancient Law, it behooves us—for the purpose of understanding the later complexes of our story—to consider just one reincarnation of the frank and sensuous, pleasure-loving Miriam in the Far East. . . .

.
. . . Where the Hooghly and the Ganges debouch their many mouths to the Bay of Bengal, the slime of vast hinterlands is interpenetrated with these majestic and slow-moving rivers. Winged creatures of color as well as dun birds of prey hover over the waters. Tropic marshes luxuriate. On the banks life brilliant and often fetid holds sway.

Equally so the wharves of Calcutta are crowded with the slime of mixed races, the garish brilliancy of the o'erdecorative Oriental; the blue-black hair, bold almond eyes, rounded

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contours and full red lips of Asian strains whose direct sensuousness seems an unmasking—almost an unclothing to nakedness—of the primitive human animal.

The Beast God and the Beast God's votaries have not died. They are very real east of Suez. In Afghanistan the hawk-nosed, ferocious mountaineers have been thought the descendants of Israel's wayward tribes. The famous Lost Ten have been placed in Central Asia, in China and in India; the Mongol is held by some to be of kinship to Moses, and the "heathen Chinees" is even to-day the worshiper of the Golden Calf.

Outside the white man's compounds, the missions and the communities of the whites, Parsees and Jews, there "ain't no Ten Commandments" as Kipling justly observed. 'Mongst the mixed breeds one truly can discover no difference 'twixt "the best" and "the worst." Moses wields no awe, Jesus inspires no profound love. Yet one sempiternal type persists, even from the foot of Sinai.

Miriam!

Miriam, the pleasure-lover, the scatterer of Disease and Death. She whose feet are not in the Narrow Way, nor is her path guided by

understanding. Miriam, priestess of the Bull Beast, vampire of all the ages, Cybele supreme, drawing her people to obscene orgies and killing them by their sin.

The beauty of her, the taint of her, is undying. . . .

.

A Chinese resort-keeper had brought to a house facing the Calcutta wharves a pretty little thing from Pondicherry.

“Her belong bimeby many lacs rupees,” he said in his queer English-Chink-Bengali. “White sahib, him take, make rich!”

The Chinaman sent her to a good Eurasian school, had her taught the languages and accomplishments; after graduation had her inducted into the even more important arts of the toilette and of pleasing men.

“Sally, her prettier than a Ranee,” the Chinese, rubbing his fat hands, would say. “Velly soon now, she meet gran’ English sahib!” The Celestial patted Sally Lung, his seventeen-year-old prize, with a dealer’s affection.

She was a flower from Pondicherry’s muck. A gay French officer had begotten her and passed on. The mother was straight Chinese. Her daughter had the sinuous Gallic grace, the

artful coquetry and the quickness of thought from the French side, conjoined to the frank animalism of the Oriental. Withal, the racial mixture had redoubled shrewdness.

“Shut up in an Englishman’s zenana!” pouted Sally to an Eurasian confidante.

“Tres mauvais! I guess not. Sally ees tres jolais, she fool zat hollid Sing Lee wiz hees ‘white slav’ sale.”

“But where would you go?” asked the friend.

“America,” said the Flower of Joy, whom the fame of our achievements, even to the restocking India with silver rupees, had reached.

“Zose Americans are ri-ich an’ big and strong. Sally like big, strong men, she please—never fear! Oui, c’est ne pas? Sally fool Sing, she go make her fortune in America. You see!”

The other Eurasian, a helpless pawn, sighed and smiled at this inkling of Sally’s incredible ambition.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SLICK CONTRACTOR

THREE years passed. . . .

By that time Dan McTavish had attained the first rungs of the ladder of his ambition. Which is not to be so greatly wondered at in a city like San Francisco, with the rich opportunities of its reconstruction boom. For Dan was hand in glove with the Municipal Center gentry, and permitted few chances to escape him. Starting in on small contracting jobs for the city, he worked into the building business. Hidden influence, smart bidding tricks, and an exceedingly crafty organization enabled him to defeat more conservative competitors, and he was now regarded as the most successful young contractor in the State.

Dan and Mary lived on the high flanks of Nob Hill. He dressed his wife lavishly, a high-powered motor car chauffeured by a Jap took them about, and they moved on the social scale of folks with an income of \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year.

John and the Mother, on the contrary, still occupied the little frame shop-and-home in the poorer quarter. John was "only a carpenter." He supported himself and Martha McTavish, who declined to take the money of her rich son.

Just to learn how Dan juggled wealth as compared with John's thin dimes, let us have a peep into the former's fine apartment where a plump butler did the honors in the hall and brought in the visitors to the handsome dress-coated young Master. The visitor on this occasion was a wide-lipped individual with rather heavy features, bull neck, bold eyes, and a cranium whereof the bump of acquisitiveness was decidedly prominent. He was in his "soup and fish" too.

"Ah, Inspector Redding—glad to see you, old pal!" said the young host.

The visitor directed his gaze to the model of a beautiful buttressed and pinnacled church edifice that stood on the Master's table.

Dan's eyes sought the same object, they exchanged glances, and then Dan spoke. It was about the job he had just entered into for the building of the church.

"This time," remarked the young contractor coolly, "we are going to take a chance on a

leaner 'mix.' One part of cement to twelve of sand and rock—with a broad-minded Building Inspector like yourself on the job, it's a cinch!"

Redding, who had been bending over, studying the model quizzically, straightened with a jerk. The brown furze on the flannel lip bristled, and the features expressed something very like consternation. Redding, really alarmed, waved away the idea.

His host immediately referred to a large volume marked BUILDING CODE. . . .

'Twas a funny kind of volume at that, for it opened in the center with hinge and clasp. Dan, unclasping the phony book, revealed within a fine array of cigars. Around the fifth from the end something yellow was wrapped. Dan selected this particular tribute to Lady Nicotine, and, winking, handed it over, saying:

"Have a cigar?"

Redding unfolded from the cigar a thousand-dollar bill. He grinned and slowly closed one eye, in vast understanding. But his mind reverted to Dan's scheme. No longer the dictator but the suppliant friend, he said earnestly:

"Listen, boy.

"'Every day in every way' we're getting

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slicker an' slicker. *But we're building this church on filled ground, and I tell you it isn't safe!*"

Dan reassured him. "Oh, I'll make it safe, never fear!" They plunged into details. Slick Dan saw out in the hallway a new arrival, John, who had entered with a large package under his arm and was just meeting Mary.

A brilliant inspiration seized the builder. "Come," he said to Redding, "we'll make my brother boss-carpenter of this new church building. Like Cæsar's wife, he's above reproach!"

The Inspector, whose qualms had been quieted, caught the idea at once.

Honest John's official connection with the enterprise would lull suspicion, and they could go ahead with their get-rich-quick conspiracy of cement cheating without getting caught.

John McTavish didn't often darken his luxury-loving relatives' door, but on this occasion he had a special errand. Mary now the social queen and lovely in evening dress, who had always kept a warm place in her heart for John, gave him a particularly cordial welcome. Claspng both his hands, she drew him into the conservatory. Picking a white flower and plac-

ing it in the button-hole of his coat, "Johnny dear," said the little hostess, "I'm sorry that after three years I still have to decorate you with a 'bachelor's button'!"

John could but smile in reply. His enduring unavowed love for her was his most treasured possession, but she was another's, the wife of his brother! Yes, it hurt, her gentle reference to the bachelorhood—how his heart ached. . . . Safest to change the subject and come to his errand.

John unwrapped the large parcel and showed Mary what he had brought. Somehow, it looked oddly out of place in the lavish home.

It was a picture enlargement, and the severe lineaments of Martha McTavish (as John held it up) seemed to look down in cold disapproval of all the apparatus of luxury.

Mary beamed at the gift, however, and soon she and John interrupted Dan and Redding's chat while the carpenter brother displayed it with simple pride.

"Look, Danny," said the wife. "Mother sent you her picture for your new apartment!"

The contractor and his pet Inspector had hard work to control their features. Even

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Mary was in on the unexpressed jibe at the queer old-fashioned thing, a relic of "Family Portrait" days.

"Well—where are you going to hang it?" simple John asked.

"Let Mary decide," replied Dan, the quick thinker, passing the picture to his spouse. "It's very good of Mother, really. And now, John, if you have a few moments, I'd like to talk with you—"

The two brothers were left alone. Redding took himself off. Mary went out with the picture and busied herself in the house.

"It was great news to Mother," said John, "that you'd landed the contract for the church—she almost feels you're one of her Bible sort once more. I'm thinking 'twill add ten years to her life, she is so delighted and happy!"

"Good!" replied the contractor, who was in an ingratiating mood. He smiled persuasively and patted his mechanic brother.

"Johnny," he said, "I'm going to make you boss-carpenter on this new job."

John frowned and looked serious. He hesitated to speak, then finally said:

"I—don't—know—" Starting again with an effort, "I've heard some nasty rumors, Dan

—about your smuggling in the jute for your plaster!” He fingered nervously the steel ring to which were attached samples of the various kinds of East India jute.

With a laugh Dan took the ring from his hand and placed it back of John’s head and slightly above, in the position of a halo.

“Look at yourself in the mirror,” grinned Dan. “What’s the use of being such a saint?”

For answer John recovered the steel ring and with his powerful grip twisted it into the shape of a figure 8. He held it out before him, then inserted a hand of his brother’s in each of the apertures. “There are two ways of wearing it, Danny,” said John meaningly.

The slick brother disengaged himself of the improvised handcuffs. “No danger of that! I’m too careful—” He dropped the joking and said earnestly:

“I want you to take this job, John, because I’ll pay you enough money to buy Mother some of the things that she refuses to accept from me.” The tone of sincerity was in his voice, the church construction so dear to his mother’s heart appealed tremendously to John.

Dan’s disclaimer of villainy, the prospect of giving the little Mother ease, carried the day.

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John agreed to boss the woodwork of the church. The two brothers shook hands.

Yet there was a flare-up betwixt them as John's bachelor button dropped to the table and Dan quickly picked it up, forestalling the other. He (Dan) had seen Mary's little act of auld lang syne affection in presenting the flower, and some jealous demon impelled him to twit John.

"While you're so earnest about your Ten Commandments," he said, mockingly, "isn't there one which says something about 'coveting your brother's wife'?"

"You're right, Dan, I *do* love Mary!" was John's straight-from-the-shoulder answer.

Both men were worked up, confronting each other. Neither had noticed the slight figure of Mary on the stair landing. She paused, rigid, as she overheard John's declaration.

"I won't forget that she *is* your wife," continued John. "I hope YOU won't forget it either!"

(The figure on the stair raised sorry and empty hands. . . . Seemed it possible that "smashing the Ten Commandments" had not brought mutual happiness to husband and wife? . . . Had Dan's devious ways sickened her, and

did she more truly admire the honest man whom she had rejected? The girl thrilled strangely, and with a sort of convulsive movement turned away.)

John's breasting of Dán made the latter mad clean through. For the moment he felt the Cain to the other's Abel. Pshaw! The situation was his, why fight? Yes, he had Mary, and John—the simpleton!—would serve him as camouflage and cat's-paw.

The contractor decided to take his brother's words in good part. He smilingly acknowledged their good intent, and the men parted without a rupture.

Despising John at heart as he did, Dan himself failed to realize that with every building he put up he, the successful brother, was tearing down part of his own soul! "THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!" meant nothing to him.

CHAPTER XX

END OF SALLY'S QUEST

MISS SALLY LUNG, the eternal magdalene of our Far East scene—the slant-browed, almond-eyed, scarlet flower out of the muck of Pondicherry—escaped from the wharves of Calcutta about twenty months before the date of these occurrences.

Having won the fancy of a viking South Sea captain, she was boldly rifled from the jealous care of Sing Lee, the Calcutta resort keeper who had meant to sell her to an English tea planter as his mistress. The beautiful Eurasian took the grand tour of the copra islands instead, in company with her fierce Northman of whose primitive single-mindedness she came to tire. She escaped from him in an open boat, and by the mischances of the sea landed at Molokai!

There she would have remained forever an outcast but for the kenning of the wiles of the "heathen Chinees." A smuggler's cargo of jute from Calcutta had been wrecked and partially

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beached on a lonely stretch of coast. The indefatigable comprador made a getaway, and returned with another vessel to salvage the dry bales. Sally, who had "much cash," made a bargain with him. He was to take her aboard and smuggle her into Frisco as jute.

The plan was carried out with the slickness of two clever Chinese who understood everything except morals. Just before they came in sight of western America, the jute of one large bale was partly pulled out and Sally Lung found a nest within. She was supplied with food, water, air-vent and a knife. That night the jute bales were landed at an obscure wharf where Dan McTavish's runners befooled the United States Custom officers.

"Number Seven bale—him velly good!" the comprador told Contractor McTavish gleefully. "You want—make own use—you pay tlee-fou'—five hunded dollah, maybe." The Chinaman was almost playful. He whispered in Dan's ear.

As the keen Dan was hurrying to the wharf, a weird little scene was being enacted there while the watchman with his stick and lantern was loafing at the far end. . . .

Through "No. Seven bale" a knife protruded.

It slashed the burlap again and again till a four-foot cut was made.

Then came out wriggling, snaky-like fingers, velvety white hands and finally a closely shrouded feminine figure with the face also closely veiled.

Miss Sally Lung looked about. So this was America, her Land of Promise! But where was her American, the man-God who should minister her pleasures? Better avoid the lumbering watchman now, find her Desired later!

Miss Sally Lung, cat-like, crept around the corner.

As she neared the end of the wharf she threw off concealment. Minus her veil and the enshrouding coat, Sally was distractingly pretty in her bold half-French, half-Chinese way. Dan almost plumped into her. From the wisps of jute sticking to her cloak, he made no doubt whatever she was "No. Seven bale."

Sally looked at the handsome, well-set-up young fellow. Again her prescience had served her. Before she had set foot on Frisco soil, here was the "strong, ri-ich American" she craved.

"Plees', will you be so good—show me ze way to China Town?"

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“You are the young—er—lady who came in the jute, I think,” replied Dan, who had a way with the sex. “Do you know you belong to me? I own all this cargo!” with a wave of the hand.

“Psst! do not tell ze officiers—or they will send Sally back! Quick, ze watchman he comes! Plees’, I can run a leetle if ze gran’ Sahib wi-ill take my hand!”

.
It was the beginning of an infatuation wherein Dan, who had broken most of the divine commands, played tennis with the Seventh. The opprobrium of the scarlet sin meant nothing to him—or to her. But she was wise with the calculating wisdom of the eternal Cybele, fended him off until she had got what she wanted. . . .

.
Contractor McTavish’s enterprises continued to flourish. Eight months later his beautiful, nearly completed church stood—with its walls of rotten concrete—a monument to his defiance of God’s law.

Through the scaffolding which nearly hid the front, a work elevator now and again shot dizzily to the skies. High up on the narrow roof, 200 feet above the street, Boss Carpenter John

McTavish found much to do before the final topping of the structure with a Gothic forestation of spire, turret and pinnacle.

On the ground level the scalawag McQuire, a creature of Dan's, had sole charge of the cement mix, whilst a watchman doorkeeper saw to it that no prying eyes were about. Limiting John's sphere entirely to the carpentry, the head conspirators felt secure.

On the morning of which we tell, Dan keened the reward of his cleverness. Not only was a large part payment on the work in immediate prospect, but the elusive Sally Lung—the infinitely sinuous and beautiful Eurasian—was to be the reward of his endeavors. “Mon beau Americain,” she had said, “he geef me lovenest, an’ ze pretty jewels, make Sally happy—zen Sally love—Oh, so much!” The fatuous Dan, without haggling, had surrendered to the terms. . . .

In the little contracting office, beneath the towering church walls, a man from the local Tiffany's had left a precious box and departed. The white satin casket held an exquisite rope of pearls. Dan was sparkling with pride and Redding, his pal, was admiring and jestful.

“Wouldn't they look great on your wife?”

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said the inspector, stringing the pearls around a framed photo of Mary's and holding it up to view.

"Yes, would they?" said Dan, with averted face. He had no mind to be thinking of Mary.

"Miss Sally Lung is here, sir."

The individual who entered with this announcement was none other than Steve Bohannon, the boon friend of Dan's poor days and now his clerk. Steve winked and grinned, with the familiarity of old acquaintance. His eyes rolled eloquently—Stevie was "on."

"Yes, in just a moment!"

Steve discreetly retired.

Redding laid a hand on the contractor's shoulder. "Go easy, son! This Sally Lung is half French and half Chinese." He paused and continued: "The combination of French perfume and Chinese incense is more dangerous than nitro-glycerine!" In that vivid way of his, he pantomimed a sudden puff—and an explosion.

Dan laughed, made ready to receive the visitor. The door opened noiselessly on the crack. The slant-browed beauty—her almond eyes and piquant features set off by a ravishing little toque—peered around the corner.

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“Did my lord send for me?” purred Sally. She was catlike in her approach, sleek and enchanting. She wore a wonderful white cloak, soft and rich as a Persian feline’s fur. One hand and arm was bare, she was removing a long, embroidered glove from the other. The truly magnificent Sally stood at the desk, looking down on the heir of the House of McTavish.

Dan, returning her gaze, waggled a commanding finger at Redding, who somewhat morosely departed. The infatuated contractor steadied himself by lighting a cigarette.

Sally took it from his lips, puffed it, and returned it with a caressing arm around his shoulder, putting it in his mouth again. Then she moved to the satiny casket on the table and started to pick it up. But Dan wasn’t minded to pay in advance! Regaining the precious object, he opened the jewel case and let her glimpse the wonderful sixty-inch necklace; then he put it away.

Sally opened a new attack.

“For luncheon to-day, in the new apartment of Sally Lung—is prepared the Chinese love-drink ‘Ny-gar-pay’—distilled from a thousand lotus flowers.’”

She was now the soft, surrendering magdalene!

“Yes, I think I can make it—and I’ll bring the rope of pearls.” Sally’s eyes gleamed. Dan sought the preliminary tribute of a kiss. Cunning as he, she fended him off—ever so slightly.

A bargain was a bargain. She awaited its fulfillment.

While this scene was taking place Mary McTavish was on her way to the office with her husband’s lunch. Since their poorer days she had made a habit of thus saving him minutes, but the workman’s pail was now replaced by elegant basketry and within were thermos bottles and the choicest fare. It was a kind of rite of Mary’s, who to-day looked stunning in her modish cream suit relieved by black fur edgings, neck and wristlets. The Jap chauffeur bowed her out of the handsome motor and handed her the basket.

“Will you please tell my husband,” she asked Steve, “that I have brought his luncheon?”

Steve, looking oddly embarrassed, faced her in front of the office door.

“I’m very sorry, but Mr. McTavish left here

a few minutes ago"—Steve gulped as if swallowing his words—"to take luncheon with some bankers!"

Mary's roving eyes sought the floor. Something or other lay at her feet. Yes! It was a woman's glove. She bade the clerk pick it up. A tell-tale glove, arm-long, exquisitely embroidered in an exotic pattern. Mary, in a flash, sensed what it—and the shut door—meant! The distracted clerk, wiping off the beads of perspiration that stood on his face, was perforce obliged to let her keep the gauntlet as departing she gave him a cool "Good morning!"

Steve moved to acquaint his master, then jumped at the sound of footsteps. No, it wasn't Mrs. McTavish returning; just the Japanese chauffeur who in passing grinned widely as if to say, "I'm on!"

.

John, from the top of the church, saw Mary at the motor. Pleased as Punch, he waved his arms and shouted a greeting from his lofty perch.

Mary called and waved back, decided the lunch would serve John if not Dan, and started running across the street, basket under arm,

toward the construction work. Too late John realized what his friendly hail had let her in for.

“Don’t come up,” he shouted down, trying to make himself heard. “It’s nineteen dizzy flights—blowing great guns.”

If she heard the faraway voice, she was too excited and eager to heed it. “I’ll take the Air Line Short Cut!” she shouted back, a-quiver with the joy of the adventure. A plasterer and his barrow made way for her, and she hopped into the work-elevator.

She silenced the protests of the lift engineer who operated the contraption by ground floor levers. “Send it up!” she commanded imperiously. Hesitating, he obeyed her.

Up—up—up toward the skies shot the lift, with its eager, thrilled passenger.

Overhead, naught but the cerulean blue; around, the open timbering of the church-high scaffold—at her journey’s end, John! Up there, the ordinarily cool Boss Carpenter acted very much the maniac!

Wildly gesturing, he ran to the shaft head, peered over, lifted the gate bar, and prepared to grab, even before the lift bumped the top timber. But to his intense relief Mary was all

right. She lightly gave him her hand, and stepped out from the opened gate onto the concrete.

“You little devil, are you trying to give me heart failure?” He was reacting from the strong excitement. “You had better go down as fast as you came up, I think,” he said gravely. “This sky eyrie is no place for a woman!”

CHAPTER XXI

DISCOVERY!

MARY smiled and displayed her basket. "You can't send me down," she cried, "when I've brought you such a wonderful lunch! Besides," her gaze now circled the grand panorama of sky and peaks, "besides, this is probably the nearest to Heaven I'll ever get!"

From the scenes above, Mary looked down toward the pavement. The sight did not dizzy her, but after a moment she plucked John's sleeve.

"Look, what do you see down there?" She pointed to the curb in front of Dan's office.

The contractor and a modishly dressed beauty (pigmy in perspective, but clearly distinguishable) were stepping from the sidewalk into a fine sedan. There was a fleeting glimpse of some endearment (Mary wondered if Dan had really dared kiss the hussy in public!). He looked quickly up and down the street to see if he had been spied on, then the glass

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door closed, and the sedan, guided by its feminine driver, was whisked away!

The two on the tower looked at one another silently. The same thought was in the mind of each—Dan's declaration after he had won Mary from his brother and was leaving home: "I'm going to smash ALL your old Ten Commandments!"

Mary at last broke the silence, smiling ruefully.

"Well, he has one Commandment left," she said. "I don't think he has killed anybody yet!"

.

Mary emptied her luncheon basket and prepared to take her departure.

She stepped around John, and with one foot on the edge of the coping, sought the elevator landing.

Beneath the French heel, the edge of the concrete crumbled like sawdust. Losing her footing, she raised wild arms, trying to catch hold of anything that offered. Mary was falling—falling through the open shaft to the death that would jump at her from below!

With a superhuman effort she managed to seize a cross timber and hung there!

Now John was down among the timbers, holding on with one hand, while he got the other around the pendent girl's waist. With herculean strength he encircled and upraised her until her whole weight shifted to his arm, then brought her panting to safety on the platform above.

For a moment or two they stood huddled there, his arm not yet withdrawn, her head pressed against the crook of his shoulder. Half consciously, the saved girl was gently stroking his breast.

Recovering herself, she looked up at him with a new lovelight in her eyes, and an inscrutable smile in which spoke the eternal wisdom of Eve.

"I think it would have been less dangerous, John," she said, "if you had let me fall." But John was already at the job of tapping the flawed coping with a small hammer.

There had been one spectator of their unwonted embrace, and he, after the manner of his kind, inferred the worst.

As Redding—on one of his fake inspections—started up the last stairway, he just caught sight of them. "O-ho!" The "Inspector" closed one eye completely. The smirk of his

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moon-like face said plainly: "So that's the way the land lays!" Redding mounted the stairs.

"Mary, I want you to get off here, quick!" was the stern word from John. He was showing her a large chunk of the concrete which his light taphammer had chipped off. "Criminal!" he said. "Look! It crumbles to pieces under the fingers." A moiety of it, under his clutch, broke to a white dust as Redding approached them.

John held out the find.

"Redding," he said, earnestly, "if all the rest of the concrete is as rotten as this section, work on this church is going to stop right now!"

The mild John was mad clean through.

For the first time since he had protested to the contractor against the lean mixture, Redding was thoroughly alarmed. John would simply spill everything! Some quick work was needed. First, Mary must be appealed to.

"Mrs. McTavish," Redding, ignoring the other, addressed the contractor's wife, "somebody's been feeding our Angel-Face here red meat.

"If you know where Dan is, get him quick—before his loving brother gets us all in the papers!"

It was a frightened Redding that spoke, and for once his thought about Dan was on all fours with John's.

The girl fetched Sally's glove out of her bag. The clew that would find him! Yes, in the arms of another woman. Mary hated her task. But she must get Steve's aid and rout out Dan—there was no other way! John escorted her to the head of the stairway, taking care to keep her from the perilous coping. Then he faced around, confronting Redding.

That functionary had been fumbling in his pockets and had brought out a handful of yellowbacks. Grasping John's arm in his confidential pol. way, he began to talk rapidly, denying, extenuating, arguing that the flaw was probably the result of a solitary bad "mix."

Presently Redding came to the point, as he conceived it. Proffering the yellowbacks, "Young man," he said meanfully, "minding your business pays very big dividends!"

Biff!

John's right fist shot out and landed on the inspector's right maxillary. Without waiting to count the damage, he was on his way and disappearing down the stairs.

The knocked down pol. ruefully nursed his

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swollen jaw in one hand while with the other he tried to replevin the flying "yellow boys." Some went off in space, many of them floated down through the timbering.

The shower of United States currency descended like manna on three workmen far below. "Sweet papa!" cried a mechanic, grabbing off into space for a yellow \$100 note. He caught it while hanging from a rafter, then chinned himself and rejoined the others who were reveling in their tens, twenties and fifties.

CHAPTER XXII

AT THE CHURCH, AND AFTER

THE thunder of God is not always in the sky. It may sometimes be heard in the rumble of heavy sand trucks over a cobbled street!

So indeed John the honest brother heard it as he sought to disprove or confirm his fears of the building's rottenness. On the way down he tested soft sections of the concrete with growing alarm. On reaching the street level he hastened around to the rear of the church, figuring that there Dan and Redding would have put the rottenest "mix."

Back of the apse was a poorly cobbled, very uneven street with many humps and depressions, over which the passage of the five-ton trucks sounded like artillery. John could actually feel the ground shake. He looked up. There was an irregular crack up and down the apse wall, a crack which was widening and lengthening with the successive vibrations! Chips of the concrete were falling. Quick! There was no time to lose. John raced around

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to the front of the building, demanding of McQuire:

“I want the truth about this concrete—how much cement are you putting in the mix?”

“None of your d—d business! Ain’t you a carpenter?”

John seized the rascal by the shirt collar, and shook him as a terrier would shake a rat. He started to pummel him, but Mac abjectly surrendered.

“About one to twelve!” said the boss mixer. “I was told to double up on the sand—and cut down on the cement.”

Still holding on to McQuire, John hailed a passing employee. He spoke with determined authority. “Here, you—

“Tell Kelly to call all the men off the scaffolding, and to allow no one inside the building!”

The man fairly ran with the message. John still held to his prisoner, with whom he meant to confront Dan. He partly dragged, partly escorted him toward the office.

The workers were now descending from the scaffolds, and the doorkeeper had his new orders. At least, there shouldn’t be loss of life. . . . No one particularly noticed a quaint little

figure that approached the front of the edifice and looked pridefully up at the large sign on the face of it, reading:

DANIEL McTAVISH
CONTRACTOR

The sightseer was Martha McTavish. Her old religious disputes with her son Dan now in the limbo of the buried past, she was immensely proud and happy that her son—The McTavish—had been chosen to erect the church. Somehow he seemed to her a changed person, meliorated and transfigured by the identity with God's house of worship! She must see the wonders of the inside, really.

“Building's closed!” announced the doorkeeper, waving her back. “Strict orders no one must enter!” he added, less gruffly.

“I'm sure it's all right for me to go in,” replied the little old lady, calmly. “I'm Mrs. McTavish, Dan's mother!” She pointed affectionately to the large sign. “I'm sure he won't mind having his mother look around.”

The doorkeeper, who didn't know the reason for the building's closing, let her pass.

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Mother McTavish went through the nave and paused in front of the twin tablets in the apse, the edges of which she reverently touched with her fingers.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS!

• • • • • • •
Sally got her rope of pearls. Dan drank the Ny-gar-pay, which turns men into satyrs. She knew no moral code. He knew all the Ten, professed to flout them. Under the influence of the delicious drink, Dan's veins became fire. He clasped the willing, slant-eyed, voluptuous Magdalene in his arms, forgot whether any Commandments—Ten or other—existed!

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY! meant no more to him than the out-of-bounds rules of the United States Golf Association. Dan thought it a fine thing that, while having a pleasing little wife in the purlieus of Nob Hill, he should cherish an adorable Eurasian sweetheart in Grant Avenue.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN THE APSE FELL—

. . . STEVIE and Mary managed, between them, to rout Dan out of his Oriental elysium. 'Twas an intensely distasteful—nay, disgusting—task to Mary. Steve effected the harder part of it—the pulling him away from Sally—by the outright statement that the church building was endangered. They got him into the family coupé, and the knowing Jap chauffeur made double speed to Washington Square. Dan hardly spoke during the rapid journey.

“Thank God, you’ve come!” exclaimed Redding, welcoming him at the little office. He looked injured, and he was certainly nursing a badly swelled jaw. “That angel brother of yours,” complained the inspector, “is raising H—ll!”

The truth of Redding’s remark was borne out by the entry of John, still holding fast to McQuire with the one hand, and in the other hand bearing lumps of the building material.

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He laid them out before his brother, and showed him how they crumbled.

“You can’t get away with it, Dan!” shouted John. “You’re stealing thousands of dollars on your concrete—and something’s going to smash!”

It was peculiar how Dan took the onslaught. Instead of replying to John, he was addressing his wife, who seemed to have confirmed John’s charge of cheating.

“Don’t be a fool, Mary!” said Dan sharply. “You ought to know I can’t make enough money to maintain us in this style, without cutting on some of the specifications. And Brother John here,” he sneered, “isn’t interested in concrete. He is trying to ruin me, in order to get you!”

At the insult John raised his fists. Mary had all she could do to avert fighting by the maddened brothers. She intervened so she would necessarily be the target of their blows, and succeeded in separating them.

Somehow she had the power of calming John particularly, whose next speech was in a vein of brotherly appeal.

“Danny,” he said earnestly, “you’ve got to make this concrete right! You can’t break

every law of God and man, and get away with it!”

Dan plainly was cornered, but he had his big argument in reserve. Defiantly, he faced John and Mary equally.

“I told you I’d break the Ten Commandments,” he cried, “and look what I’ve got for it—SUCCESS!

“That’s all that counts!

“I’m sorry if your God doesn’t like it—but this is MY party, not HIS! . . .”

As if to refute the words, a terrible crash from somewhere outside deafened their ears.

The avalanche repeated itself on a somewhat lesser scale, then reduced to a series of minor crashes and rumbles.

For a moment the trio stood horror-stricken. John was the first to recover, and dashed out of the office door. Dan still stood, as if frozen with horror. Mary was tearful yet wide-eyed. A mechanic’s maniacal face showed itself at the window.

“The south wall’s fallen,” he yelled. “They say an old woman was underneath!” The crazed worker vanished as he had come.

The wife approached the Commandment-

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breaker as if, even yet, she might console him. Dan's head was in his hands. He seemed to be sobbing. He waved back her overture. Realizing she could not help him, she too sought the catastrophe. At last the young master builder himself faced the end of his work. He stepped from the office into the church.

The scene there presented was a terrible one. From the wreckage protruded great ghastly lengths of wire and lath, flapping above the dust storm. The whole rear wall of the apse was down, save only a small projection upholding the twin tablets that stood awful, majestic. The apse floor itself was a huge moraine of boulders, buttresses, pillars and builder's material, across which walking was almost impossible.

"Look!" cried a workman, "there's somebody crushed under that there big stone!"

John reached the spot first by his extraordinary physical agility, and soon he and the others removed the crushing weights. Horror! The mangled figure revealed was that of the little mother. John lifted her tenderly, and carried her where the tortured body and poor limbs could be eased. Some of the crew had

rung for an ambulance, the surgeon of which now entered the wrecked church.

He bent over the victim for a few moments, feeling her pulse and heart beats and examining her hurts.

“There’s nothing any one can do,” said the city doctor gravely. “It’s only a matter of minutes!” He left the sufferer at death’s dark door with the family, after waving back the bystanders.

Mary was sobbing, John rigid with this incredible sorrow, but Dan was leaning over the dying figure—imploring, passionately.

“Johnny, dear,” said the feeble, choked voice of the mother, “I want to talk to Danny—alone.” Quickly he and Mary obeyed her last request.

“Oh, Mom, don’t die,” cried Dan, in broken accents, “or it’ll be me that killed you! I built these walls—and they’re made of rotten concrete!”

The little mother asked him to release the brooch at her neck. He opened it for her, and she fondled two locks of hair within.

“It’s your hair, Danny, my own little boy—whatever you’ve done, it’s all my fault,” she smiled wanly, pitifully. “I taught you to fear

God instead of to love Him—and love is all that counts!” She stopped, each word costing her a pang. Mary and John drew near, at a gesture from Dan. She saw them. “Dan’s—hair,” she ejaculated feebly. “When—he—was a—baby!” She groaned, turned slightly, and fell into the eternal sleep.

As they bent solemnly to look if she had passed away, Dan’s eyes somehow went from her dead form to the awful Tablets still unbreakable among the wreck that had killed her. Across their face formed the lettering—

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!

—then dissolved again, and Dan for the first time saw himself as he was—A THIEF—in the sight of God and Man!

CHAPTER XXIV

STRAIT IS THE GATE, NARROW THE WAY

THREE people and the Commandments!

What has the august Book now to say to them?

For truly—in the supreme crisis of life—the teachings that we have imbibed from infancy stand out, whether to scourge, to inspire or to bless.

We are driven back upon them, even as Dan, Mary and John were by the tragic death of the little “Bible Mother.”

Yet, strangely enough, one finds in the Bible only what he or she puts into it.

To the believer, faith; to the warm-hearted, divine love; to the stern, God’s judgment day; to the rationalist, inconsistencies and shortcomings; to the scoffer, drivel, and to the wicked, rules made to be broken!

.
Dan knew that he had committed a crime, and suffered torments because of his mother’s death. During that brief and awful experi-

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ence when "THOU SHALT NOT STEAL" was limned upon the Tablets, he knew himself a thief before God and Man.

Not for long, however!

His subliminal self interpreted the "crime" as being a failure to be "smart enough" to get away with it.

If the unlucky cement mix had not proved too lean, if the Church had stood up and his parent been spared, Dan (so his second self told him) would have reaped the illegal gains without a qualm.

Everybody—the contractor, the pol., the wage-grabbing mechanics, the church authorities demanding low bids, the money-lenders extorting higher interest, the building supply men jacking up prices—everybody was trying to get the best of it. They got as much—gave as little—as they could. That was business! His was business too. Only, he had gone too far. The Eighth Commandment was a rule made to be broken.

*"And Jehovah said unto Moses: Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee forever.
* * * And all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the voice of the trumpet,*

and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood far off.

*“And Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mount; and Jehovah called Moses to the top mount; and Moses went up * * * And God spake all these words, saying:*

*“I am Jehovah, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of bondage. * * * Thou shalt have no other gods before Me * * * Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image * * * Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain * * * Remember the Sabbath Day * * * Honor thy father and thy mother * * * Thou shalt not kill * * * Thou shalt not commit adultery * * * Thou shalt not steal * * * Thou shalt not bear false witness * * * Thou shalt not covet. * * * An altar of earth shalt thou make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen * * * And if thou wilt make me an altar of peace, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it * * * ”*

The eye of faith sees the grand commands belching forth in a storm-wracked heaven, whilst the ear is awed by the voice of the celestial trumpet. The eye of the modernist equally sees God gradually revealed in the primitive worship of the fiery Jehovah of the Mount, out of which was to grow the majestic monism of Israel.

But the lightnings and thunders of the law passed Dan by, somehow.

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He saw not the transgressions against the code as violations of Nature's own law.

Fire burns and water drowns, he knew that. Even so, dishonesty wrecks, the collapse of his church might have told him. But it did not, for his defiant predatory spirit held that "morals don't mean anything."

Catastrophe was simply ill luck or bad strategy.

And so, while curiously the jerry-builder sought again the Book of his mother after her death and explored the Pentateuch to find what he had missed, the Lord spake not to him out of the burning bush. Moses wielded no awe. Nor—in the New Book—did Jesus suffuse His heart with pity, bringing forth "works meet for repentance."

"Thou shalt not build it (the altar) of hewn stone: for if thou lift thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." Exodus! Why, according to that, the very church was a sacrilege!

.
Superstition and outworn taboos were about all that Mary got out of the Code.

Although through the contrast of Dan's derelictions and John's integrity she had come to

revere the Commandments, their worth, to her, was admixed with the dross of foolish rites and observances.

Or (to change the figure) Mary could not see the wood because of the trees!

The long enumerations of offenses, pains, penalties—the long rosters of difficult names that Martha had loved to roll under her tongue—the minute rules of this first Hebraic “Board of Health” anteceding the quick modern ways of washing and disinfection—the quaint loading of the scapegoat with the people’s sins—the blood of the gory sacrifice—the polygamy and the concubinage—the law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”: these and a thousand other things in the Ancient Writ jarred on her modern spirit and appeared trivial, barbaric or meaningless. Little she understood the sublimity of Judaism; still less, how the austerity of Israel’s tribal faith had been ameliorated by her singers and prophets, and under the newer dispensation sweetened by the God-Man Jesus, who in His love for all mankind died to save the world!

. . . (Truly Martha, like John Bunyan, had lived in the fear of the great Jehovah. The sterner features of the law for her, as for

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many other Puritans, had obscured its healing grace.) . . .

There was no comfort for Mary in recalling the mother's teachings or in poring over the code. Warm-hearted, yet ignorant, the girl-wife had not learned the diviner message of the Book.

There beat the Master Heart of humanity, but her benumbed and groping soul was not aware of it.

.

“Blessed are they that mourn,” John read with moist eyes, *“for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.*

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.”

Yes, Jesus fulfilled the Ten Commandments, but it was His Divine mission to save by sympathy and love!

*“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. * * * But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

*“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. * * * Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. * * * Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”*

Though Jesus’s call was to all, it could not save the obstinate or insincere.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;

but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.”

John thought of the church job and of the rottenness which made it fall. As if in echo of his thought he read:

*“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it. * * **

“After this manner therefore pray ye—”

John put down the Book, and sinking to the floor said the beautiful prayer which he had learned at his mother’s knees: that prayer which is the very breath of Christendom—

“Our Father which art in heaven,

“Hallowed be thy name,

“Thy kingdom come.

“Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

*“Give us this day our daily bread,
“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our
debtors.
“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver
us from evil,
“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, forever,
“Amen.”*

CHAPTER XXV

JOHN AND DAN

JOHN rose from his knees. His face shone, and his eyes were no longer wet.

God's mysterious way was beyond mortal ken, yet His mercy endured forever. In punishing Dan, He had taken the little mother beyond Life's troubled sphere into her eternal rest. She was happier there, he knew. Her eternal rest was eternal joy.

What was God's purpose to Dan and Mary and himself? Even the All-Creator could not change His handiwork. He had implanted in each a sovereign Will, a Self that determined whether to obey the divine decrees or no! It was theirs to work with Him or against Him, to defy Him or love Him. . . .

The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount!

One, the inexorable law of Nature and Nature's God!

The other, the voice of Divine mercy . . .

“Him that cometh unto Me . . . I will in no wise cast out.” . . . Would that Dan and Mary might seek the fount of grace. . . . Dan had sinned, but Mary had not. . . . She was only ignorant and helpless . . . John felt he would give his very life to aid her—another’s wife, yet John’s first and only love!

Yet that was the one thing he could not possibly do now, nor could he rightly claim an iota of her attention—a share of the interest that had once exclusively been Dan’s, but now was but too willing to center on himself! John did not fool himself. They could not come together without mutual love. The scene in the Tower had revealed each to the other. He owed it to both Dan and Mary to keep away. He owed to Mary the obligation of bringing her to the Good Book, of letting her see it as he saw it. But it was impossible—

John fell into a brown study. The circumstances surrounding his mother’s bitter death had stirred obscure imaginings. To the erstwhile matter-of-fact brother now came a vision of Dan and Mary drifting, drifting down swift rapids and o’er the brink of an awful Niagara whilst he on the bank was tied and fast, unable to save! . . . He woke from the nightmare.

. . . Could he save them yet? . . . He would try!

As if in answer to his thought there was a knock on the door of the carpenter shop and Dan appeared.

“I am a ruined man,” said the contractor, “every friend I had to count on has deserted me after the—er—accident.

“The big payment on the work was to have been on the very day the apse wall fell—and I was badly over-extended.

“The whole cursed thing is a total loss unless I get help. What’s the use of saying I won’t be such a fool with a bad ‘mix’ again? The fact is Daniel McTavish, Inc., hasn’t a dollar to re-start and stands within twenty-four hours of bankruptcy.”

The battered Dan eyed John gloomily, hands in empty pockets. John could see that the tragedy had unnerved him. The boyish self-confidence, the colossal nerve was gone, and he was the ghost of his scheming self.

“I’ve saved \$5,000,” replied John, “and you’re welcome to it. For Mother’s sake as well as your own,” he added, “—to make good and true the church that she loved. Oh, Dan,” cried John, “why can’t you pattern after her

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now?" The honest fellow urged his brother to atone, though tardily, to her memory. But Dan said it was hopeless.

"Five thousand dollars—that won't stave it off. A drop in the bucket, I tell you. You don't understand. I'm involved for a good many thousand. Unless I get big funds, I'm lost! Couldn't you—"

Dan was now eyeing his brother with growing excitement. He was wondering if the bacon of the McTavishes could be saved by a master stroke.

"Haven't you a trust fund of the carpenters?"

"Yes," John replied slowly.

"What's the name of it?"

"Carpenters and Joiners' Mutual Benefit Association."

"That's right, and you're the Treasurer. How much in Bank?"

"About \$45,000."

"Whew! And probably as much more you could scare up on the mortgages and bonds you have out. Look here, John, if you really want that church built right out of respect to poor Mother, and me—and Mary—saved from the

poorhouse (not to mention jail yawning for your beloved brother), you're going to draw me a check for that \$45,000 and follow it up with the other loans as you get hold of the money.

“Now listen to me—it's lending to the best sort of security, a church. You have my word for it, no more ‘lean mix.’ I'll throw out McQuire, and you can boss the cement. As soon as the bad part is repaired—say, in four weeks—the church people will have to make their payment, and I will pay you back. *For God's sake, John,*” his voice broke into a despairing note, “*get me this money unless you want to see me go plumb to h—ll.*”

It was a terrible moment for John.

Should he temporize, telling his brother that he would call a council and endeavor to persuade the members to such a loan?

Too well he knew they would instantly reject it. He himself would reject it, as the trustee of his thousand co-laborers.

What? To venture trust funds, sacredly given over in his keeping, in an over-extended operation of which a part had already collapsed in dust heaps to the ground? Of which the

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other parts which he had tested chipped off like loosely cohering sand, a mass of rottenness from floor to summit.

It would be just outright stealing!

The Eighth Commandment again!

John loved his brother, but he had moral sense. He knew that the straightforward, downright answer was best, for never would he betray the trust that had been given into his keeping.

“No!” said John. “It isn’t mine to give. The fund is invested in fixed ways approved by all, and I would be the meanest kind of a criminal to take it—”

“But they’d never need know,” cried Dan. “You would have it back there in a month—”

“Yet that would be embezzlement,” gravely replied John. “Look here, Danny, you and I are going to have a showdown! I’ll give you what’s mine, I’ll slave for you without a cent if need be to help restore what you’ve lost, but I’ll not break the law of God!

“Come clean, Danny!” he urged. “Make a breast of what you’ve done, resign the job, and come back with me to the carpenter shop—it gave us a living before, and I guess it’s going to give us a living now. . . . And Mary will

not fail you, I know—in adversity she will be a helpmeet. . . . You can live this thing down, and I'm going to help you!"

But the raging Dan for reply was applying to him all the shrieking epithets with which he and Redding mocked the "holy brother" behind his back.

"Sunday-school teacher!

"Tin Jesus!

"Angel Face!

"You may never give me the money—I don't want your psalm-singing help, dirty ingrate that you are—but I'll tell you ONE THING—you'll never have Mary!"

The frenzied Dan, who would have killed his brother if he had been his physical match, dashed out of the house. . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

DAN GOES TO SALLY

IN the presence of the august and eternal Law of the Ages, simply "being sorry" for oneself does not change matters.

Behind the choking tears comes the realization that we who err are the fulfillers of our own wrongdoing.

One cannot blot the past nor escape the sequel!

And Dan—fighting with his back against the wall—began to realize that if you break the Ten Commandments, they will break you. . . . His affairs were in desperate case, without any means of retrieval. Their livelihood, and with it the beautiful home in which he now sat nerve-shaken, would be swept away. Horror haunted him, and Fear—twin harpies that transformed the gay, shrewd, scheming youth into a balked and harried loser, whipping himself now and again with a stiff potion. . . .

Redding entered, laboring under a state of unusual excitement. He put into the hands

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of the Master a small magazine, the cover reading:

THE STINGAREE

We Throw Light Into
Dark Places

20 cents a copy.

Dan looked at the weekly town "rag" blankly, his tortured mind not functioning. His look seemed to say: "I don't 'get' it. Why bother me?"

"This little scandal sheet is hot after us!" cried Redding. "It'll take \$25,000 to buy it"—he glowered at Dan fiercely, "but it's got to be done!"

"Twenty-five thousand dollars! Blackmail, eh?" Dan laughed maniacally. "I couldn't raise two hundred and fifty!" said he. "Look

at this—" He called Redding's attention to a letter from the bank, which lay on the table in front of them.

"Mr. Dan McTavish, No. 642 Mason Street, City," it read. "You have neglected to cover your overdrafts as promised. It is imperative that you call at this bank immediately and deposit funds to cover shortage. Yours truly, C. R. Benson, Cashier."

Dan raised empty hands.

But the other man had grabbed up THE STINGAREE again, rapidly opened the pages, and pointed with minatory finger to the black-mailer's warning:

STATE PRISON—PERHAPS

In our next issue we will give you some interesting particulars concerning a certain Contractor, whose pearls were real—but whose concrete wasn't.

Dan gazed at it, and as the full force of the threatened exposure sank in, this seemed the end! There was no way out—save one! It lay in the desk drawer. It was deadly and sure. A small loaded weapon gleamed as Dan clutched it and raised it to his temple. But Redding was too quick for him. . . .

He pounced on Dan and wrested the revolver

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from him after a struggle. "Don't be an idiot!" warned Redding, backing off and still guarding the weapon.

"That's a fine way out for you!" he sneered, "but you're not going to leave me holding the sack.

"If I go to prison, I want company!"

He mastered the other with a kind of savage authority. Dan was huddled in the chair, his head in his hands. The impulse to self-slaughter was spent. His rescuer laid down the gun.

Redding spoke again as he neared the exit and McTavish looked up. The pol. possessed a kind of rude power that awed and hypnotized, withal there was a hint of affection in his pronouncement.

"Get it your own way, Son!" said Redding slowly. "Only, GET IT—or you and I will change our names to numbers!"

He was gone.

The stricken man fumbled the twisted steel ring with which his brother once had braced him. He put on the "handcuffs," dramatizing the event Redding's words had suggested. The jute samples met his vision, stirring up thoughts of smuggling, Sally, and the pearl necklace.

The pearls! Why, they were worth \$25,000! The rich furnishings he had given her—the Oriental heirlooms and antiques—aggregated an even greater sum. A ray of hope shot across the dun presentment of his future.

Haggard, but with a new and wolfish gleam in his eyes, he moved about, stuffed the revolver in his hip pocket, got his hat and cane, then paused irresolutely before the brandy decanter.

Faugh! there was need of his wits in the job before him. He decided to tackle it, fairly sober; else, she might twist him around her finger. 'Twas a way that Sally had.

.

The Chinese with a long candle-lighter was lighting up the beautiful candelabra in her Grant Avenue apartment when she glimpsed Dan (who couldn't see her) admitting himself into the outer hall with his master key.

In her widely décolleté, lustrously jettied black frock she emanated a sumptuous loveliness enhanced by the white rope of gems at her throat. If there was aught unwholesome about her, the bold piquant features and the glorious figure did not reveal it.

Not that one could describe the Sally of this

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eventful scene as merry. One could tell by her swift look that the broken master of the establishment was not likely to receive the eager welcome of the old glad days—the plump white arms around his neck and the ecstatic kisses of hot passion! She was cold and thoughtful! Something other than Dan obsessed her. Sally retired to her chair of state in the main living room. Instead of looking to the door her eyes sought again and again a copy of the morning daily on a low lacquer table beside her. She frowned at the headlines.

Dan entered. Following their old rite, he took a seat at her feet. Their mutual greeting had the casualness of old lovers. But now as Dan talked to her, he spoke with terrible earnestness, and something was up!

“I’m in trouble, Sally,” Dan faced his job, “and you’re a real friend. I’ve got to have money—and I’ve got to have it quick!”

The Chinese smiled the inscrutable smile of the Orient. Instead of answering immediately, she reached for her handbag and emptied it before him. Dollar bills—one, three, five—fluttered to the floor. “Zat ees all ze money I have!” said Sally, with a pretty gesture of nothingness.

But Dan was bending up to her, touching the rope of pearls. "I made you some pretty good presents—when I had the dough, didn't I?" he said meaningly.

Sally gently disengaged the gem-fingering hand. He partly stood, and made a pass as if to clutch them.

"You want them, eh," said Sally, evading. "No, I say no! Poor Sally would catch cold wizout her pearls!" At his insistence, her face went stern and she beat a small gong with a gong-stick. . . .

CHAPTER XXVII

THE WAGES OF SIN

. . . THE Chinese maid appeared, a slender, moon-faced girl of sixteen, arrayed in Celestial silk jacket and trousers. "Geef Mistaire McTavish hees hat an' cane!" Sally commanded. She had "shipped" troublesome admirers before. Dan was out in the middle of the room, his jaw set and his eyes ugly. As the servant offered the gear, he knocked the hat one way, the cane the other; then he strode to the door and bade the astonished girl get out!

Her trousered legs took it on the run toward the inner apartment, but Dan caught her by the shoulder and jerked her around, terrified. She was facing the door now. "March!" said Dan threateningly. She gave an imploring look to her mistress, looked at Dan with redoubled terror, and dove through the door as if catapulted. Dan shut and fastened it.

"Now, listen," he said to Sally, fiercely. "I've got to have those pearls!"

He crossed the room. But if he thought her cowed, he was mistaken. For Sally had jumped from her chair, and, as he came, defended herself behind a heavy Jap screen she tried to crash down upon him. He tossed it sidewise, and was after her. Now a chair, now a table, was between them. She dodged with catlike quickness. Once he had her, but she wriggled out.

Again he caught her, and this time he made sure by throwing her bodily on to a settee and pinning her there! Bearing down upon her so she could not escape, Dan wrested the rope of pearls from Sally's neck.

He was on his feet in another moment, stuffing the gems in his vest pocket, then picking up his hat and stick. He paused at the door.

"Now get this!" he addressed the despoiled and half recumbent Sally. "I'm going to sell out this joint—and I'm through with you, forever!"

She started up, and held out to him the newspaper she had been studying before his coming.

"You're not through with me, Dan McTavish," her voice had the quality of a doom,

“you’ll never be through with me, as long as you live!”

The startling words arrested him. He crossed over and looked at the paper.

The headlines were flaring and unmistakable:

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN FROM
MOLOKAI LEPER ISLAND
STILL ELUDES CAPTURE.

Dan glanced at Sally Lung. What on earth had that to do with them?

Dan returned to the paper.

“Guarded references made at the United States Secret Service headquarters to-day,” he read on, “indicated that the search is still on for the mysterious young woman who disappeared from the Leper Island of Molokai many months ago.

“Almost worthy of a movie plot is the background of this particular activity of the Government agents. In fact, no information is forthcoming except that she is beautiful—and clever—”

.

Slowly Dan sensed a terror, as yet vague, nameless, indefinite. Sally was moving away. Her voice, as it floated back, linked the impend-

ing horror with him: "Something tells me that you're going to pay heavy duty on those bales of jute—which you sneaked in from Calcutta!"

Calcutta—Sally—the girl out of the jute—the beautiful leper! Dan shuddered. Could it possibly be? It would mean— Why, leprosy was a living death—supposing he had been in amorous contact with it for months! Livid with horror, he sought her, the paper still in his hand.

"Are you the Molokai outcast?"

It was Sally's moment. Let him writhe in his agony—let him find out—yes or no! She gave him a contemptuous look as if to say: "You will know." She passed between the portières, pausing only to say: "Good-by, Danny!" The farewell was a mocking leer.

McTavish looked at his hands. Already they seemed scarred with the dread disease. Wildly he thought of the evil case of his family and himself. Branded! By that French-Chinese beast! He looked again. Yes, she had fixed him, was his thought, but she could not get away with it—the slut, the Miriam, the scatterer of disease and death! He'd fix her.

The maddened man pulled the pistol from his hip and fired through the curtains.

Following the shot came no outcry, hardly a groan—only a crunching sound as one by one the portières, pulled by an unseen weight, tore from the rings that held them up. . . . As the last one fell to the floor, the dying Sally was seen on the floor beyond.

Sally had raised herself a little with difficulty on one arm. . . . With the strange stolidity of the Oriental she addressed her final thrust. “Danny—dear—I’ll—tell—the—devil—you—won’t—be—far—behind!” The last words were all but inaudible. Sally fell back dead.

The murderer peered over her, his gun still in his hand. Unseen by him, the China maid, peeking over the transom, had been an agonized spectator. The slayer, yet untouched by remorse, but instantly driven back to thought of self, planned a way out.

Carefully he laid the pistol within the right palm of his victim to evidence a suicide, then stepped over her prostrate form and with rapid, stealthy gait, let himself out the back stairs, and so into the street.

.
Dan sought temporary nirvana in the bottle after reaching home, though there’s no place

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nor condition in this world where a man may hide from his conscience.

The hour was late and the house still.

But the surging images in his brain were a troop of avenging Furies lashing him with scorpion-like stings.

To gloat over the recovered pearls was but to recall the branding of the leprous taint—the murder of Sally—his mother's fate—the ruin of him, body and soul!

He reached for the liquor and found the container empty.

Feverishly he got the keys and opened the ample sideboard cellaret.

As he crouched low to find the liquor, he saw John's gift of Mother's portrait, shoved in there alongside the bottles. He took it out and contemplated the lineaments of Her who fondly loved him—and died through his villainy of cement cheating. Sobbingly he spoke to her:

“Oh, Mommy—I wish I'd listened to you—if I could only start all over again!”

Strange! The Red Commandment limned itself in bright letters across her face, even as the Eighth Commandment had formed athwart the Twin Tablets of his wrecked church.



A Paramount Picture.

BRANDED! BY THAT BEAST! COULD IT POSSIBLY BE?

The Ten Commandments.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL!

Slowly the writing vanished.

Dan, maniacal, reached for the first bottle, smashed off its top against the sideboard door. He took one—two—three glassfuls of the liquid, and his mania became a drunken frenzy.

Escape! Why not?

Other lands, other scenes, would harbor him. To h—ll with the foolish Commandments!

Suppose he had broken them, even the Red One against murder!

Drunkenly he stood and half spoke, half chanted.

“Ship me somewhere
 East of Suez—
 Where the best is
 Like the worst—
 Where there ain’t no
 Ten Commandments
 And a man can raise
 A thirst.”

Drunkenly his gaze rested on the day’s newspaper:

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN FROM
 MOLOKAI LEPER ISLAND
 STILL ELUDES CAPTURE.

—then it strayed to the framed cabinet of his wife on the mantelpiece. . . .

CHAPTER XXVIII

MARY!

EVEN through the fumes of alcohol, he was stunned by a new fear—

The fear of having branded her!

Behind it came other black thoughts of eventualities he had often calculated as regarding her if anything happened to him. John, for instance. He must go to her—NOW! There was much to be told and done. Still half muddled, he sought his wife's bedchamber.

She lay sleeping peacefully on the wall side of the great bed in the spacious chamber. Since her vain attempt to wrest the secret of Faith from the Bible, life for Mary had assumed a more somber hue—yet Dan had not been communicative about his troubles; earnestly she hoped the warning of the disaster might lead to new paths. Mary had at least learned loyalty and sacrifice from John. Blindly she had groped for his hand in the dark moment when Dan was alone with the dy-

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ing mother; groped for it, clasped it, and been reassured through his granite-like strength and unflinching devotion to duty.

Dan entered the bedchamber, switching on the light. He looked again at the story about the Molokai leper refugee, then from it to the sleeping form.

He moved to the bed. The noise and the light woke her; she sat up and gazed astonished at her haggard, distraught husband. "Why—what—what's the matter?" she faltered.

"Mary—I've just killed that woman!" said Dan hoarsely, edging over to her and showing the newspaper article, of which she just caught the headlines. What he was saying, the sequel of his confession, was so unbelievably horrible that she recoiled. He misunderstood her, and the demon of jealousy mastered his drink-crazed brain.

"Don't think you're going from me to John!" cried the ruined man. "You're not going, I say, because you won't dare!

"You're branded, the same as I am!"—Mary gasped—"and where I go, my wife goes with me!" He would have laid hands on her, but she, now fully realizing the taint of his touch, jumped backward as from a viper.

Backed up against the head-rest—her eyes and countenance frenzied with fear—she grasped the bedside telephone receiver and upraised it as a weapon. “If you touch me,” cried Mary, “I’ll kill you!” She was like some beautiful little animal, cruelly cornered and at bay.

.
The police had had little difficulty in trailing the man who committed the pistol murder in Grant Avenue. Not only the Chinese maid’s story, but the tell-tale evidences he had left, pointed to the late Sally’s paramour, Dan McTavish. A “bull” and a uniformed man went to the Mason Street address. They routed out the butler, found Dan’s hat and stick in the entrance hall, and walked up the stairs, though the man had protested that Mrs. McTavish was alone and asleep.

The detective (who was not a bad sort) knocked before invading her privacy.

The distraught couple came to a dead pause as they heard footsteps coming up the stairs. “The police!” whispered Dan fearfully. The knock almost immediately followed.

“Quick!” whispered Mary. “Get in bed behind me!”

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Loyal wife, her loyalty made her forget all else save Dan's being her husband and the police must not take him. She helped pull him over, then hid him behind her, under the silk sheets and coverlets.

"Come in!" said Mary.

The plain clothes man who led the others stopped a minute as he opened the door, his trained eyes looking for some sign of Dan. "Didn't I hear you talking to some one?" he asked.

Mary smiled and picked up the telephone instrument. "Good-by, dear!" she addressed a postulated intimate over the phone. "We'll have tea to-morrow."

Mary put back the receiver, enacting perfectly the rôle of milady interrupted in answering a casual call over the wire. "That was all," she said.

With equal cool assurance she denied Dan's being about, though the hawkshaws had found hat and cane on the hall rack. The detective snooped around. He pulled out from under the bed Dan's \$25,000 rope of pearls, which had fallen to the floor during Dan's and Mary's struggle.

Indeed, she had dropped it with a shudder

when he, in making confession, put it in her hand—dropped it, the foul thing, as infected with the taint of Sally.

Now, in her high resolve to save her husband, she pretended the pearls were hers.

“So glad you found them!” she told the officer. “They had been mislaid, and I was looking everywhere!”

The Eye of the Law was baffled in its ferretting. Mary’s quick wit, and the absolutely natural position of the pillow shams and bed quilt behind her averted suspicion. Everything seemed to point to the inference that Dan had not yet come in. The detective approached her again and spoke:

“I have a warrant for the arrest of your husband on a charge of murder!” He looked around again and resolved to make a further search. “I must ask you to dress—meanwhile we’ll wait downstairs.”

Tensely Mary watched him depart and close the door on the privacy of her chamber.

Tensely, as conscious of her heart-beats and of the warm body behind her, she counted the audible footsteps of the men going down the stairs. . . . When all was quiet she threw off the shroud of the fugitive. . . . The partner

she had shielded came forth, haggard, contrite. . . .

“Mary, you’ve been wonderful,” he said, “and I’m rotten all through. If I believed in a God—I’d ask Him to bless you.”

His hands groped forward, hesitatingly—the first sign of an affection he had denied her for many months. He withdrew them again as the thought of his uncleanness smote him. . . .

There came the look of the hunted into his eyes at a sound of the movement of the officers below. Outdoors it was raining hard. The rain drops struck him through the half-open window that gave on a fire exit.

That way, escape! There was only one resource, desperate as it seemed, that might yet avail. Only he must get out of this.

“I’ll try for Mexico in the motor boat,” said Dan, hoarsely. He turned at the window ledge in a last look at the recumbent form which lay quiet in the reaction of despair.

“Forget me, Mary,” he said, in a dreadful voice, “and if you can—forgive me!” He stepped out into the storm. . . .

To Mary, who still lay there, there was no avenue of freedom, only the prospect of living death. . . . She had embraced the leper’s



A Paramount Picture.

"QUICK," WHISPERED MARY, "GET IN BED BEHIND ME!"

The Ten Commandments.

leman, shielded him with her own body—and in the act of self-sacrifice branded herself. . . . It was as Dan had said, she dared not seek a refuge—not even John. . . . John least of all, whom she loved. . . .

The curse of the filthy pleasure-lovers (was it not on her hands now?) made her an outcast.

And then Mary visioned the lapping, lapping waters of the sea, converting her slow living death into a quick one. . . . The all-cleansing sea, Nirvana of her agony, merciful ending of life's despair, how it flowed and lapped over her vileness as she sank down into its embrace. . . . A convulsive, short struggle, and then the eternal sleep! Better that way than face the hideousness of death-in-life. . . . There was but one human being to whom she must say farewell. . . . Poor Mary sought a book of poems John long ago had given her. Within it was his nosegay of their old time courting. . . . Across one of the beautiful sonnets from the Portuguese she scrawled the word: Good-by! . . . She would leave the book—with his faded orange blossoms—at his window as she sped to the tryst with the sea!

She too was soon out into the night. . . .

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LAW INEXORABLE

DAN McTAVISH's craft, named the *Defiance*, was one of the swiftest craft along the West Coast, nor was there a more skillful skipper in deep-sea motoring than Dan. He had figured it out that a few miles' journey to an unfrequented shore would place him out of the reach of the officers, thence he might cruise by easy stages and avoiding the populated beaches to Mexico. The *Defiance* always carried a reserve of fuel, water and provisions for a voyage.

He was now to put his seamanship to a supreme test, for the wildness of the night challenged man in a sort of mocking fury.

"She's running a pretty heavy sea, Boss," warned the old boathouse keeper, whose bunk was in the loft. "You've picked some night for a joy-ride!" He did his best to dissuade, but the other was adamant.

"Heave off!" cried Dan, jumping into the craft and testing the engines. The machinery of the "kicker" sang with a smooth cadence.

It throbbed, a creature of power eager to meet the hurricane, though already it was be-tossed by the waves of the usually quiet reach.

The *Defiance* shot into the angrier waters of the bay, Dan guiding it from the wheel in the direction of the Golden Gate. The city lights from the shore—presently the winking light-houses—were the only clews in the night's blackness till a fierce storm broke and heaven's lightnings revealed the awful chasms and leaping mountains of water across which the *Defiance* was careering.

As he came into the open sea, the might of old Ocean whipped boat and mariner as Niagara would whip a cockleshell. It was impossible to lay a course. Gallantly the engines responded, but the wild, screaming blast from the nor'west, sweeping at a seventy-five mile gait, churned the waters into a hell of fury in which power was powerless!

The churning hell of them bore resistlessly against a rockbound coast. Successive lightning flashes revealed—now but a short distance away—outstanding crags and precipices that would crumple up a *Leviathan*. The engines died. Frantically the doomed mariner flung open the hood and tried to start them. No use!

Water had come in, vital parts had snapped under the terrific strains—the creature of power was silent forever! In another moment or two its now water-freighted corpse would be buried—or smashed to splinters on the ledges.

For Dan—glancing upward in the first faint light of that ghastly cyclonic dawn—now saw directly ahead and but a hundred feet away, two great crags like those of Sinai on which the divine text was written, fantastical shapes of the great stone Tablets of the Law! From their extremities extended cruel ledges, on one of which the *Defiance* was about to strike.

Raising despairing hands, he leaped for life, but found Death in the maelstrom. To his startled dying eyes—as the Fury that had shattered him, upraised him—appeared the Ten Commandments across the face of Nature's rude sculpture.

I

Thou shalt have no other GODS . . .

II

Thou shalt not make . . . any
graven image.

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III

Thou shalt not take the name of
thy Lord . . .

IV

Remember the SABBATH DAY . . .

V

HONOR thy Father . . . thy
Mother . . .

VI

THOU SHALT NOT KILL!

VII

Thou shalt not commit ADUL-
TERY!

VIII

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!

IX

Thou shalt not bear FALSE
WITNESS.

X

THOU SHALT NOT COVET!

Weirdly the waters made sport of him that had once been Dan McTavish. Cruelly they smashed up the *Defiance*, at the splintered name-board of which the drowning man had clutched. Corpse and wrecked boat timbers, the sea at last tossed them both alike on a watery sandspit in the lee of the fury. More softly now the waters washed them, more ghastly the end appeared.

Only Dan's dead form lying below the great cliff, one arm flung over a splintered piece of the boat bearing its name—*Defiance*—only this remained of the once insouciant spirit that defied the decrees of God and man! He had broken them all—all the Commandments—then they had broken him! The eternal law of the ages had exacted the penalty.

CHAPTER XXX

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

AND what of Mary?

We left her in the small watches of the night, also fleeing to a tryst with the sea—the all-cleansing sea, in whose death-dealing embrace she meant to end her misery.

For that tragic bridal were needed neither dress nor circumstance. Clad but in her shift—Neptune would clasp her; a short, choking struggle; then oblivion! She, the leprous out-cast, would no longer burden existence. But before going she must leave the good-by keepsakes for her beloved.

The sturdy John was reading at his workshop desk during the wee sma' hours. Tiny, the terrier—Mary's gift—snoozed comfortably atop the desk, but his doggy naps didn't interfere with his watch and ward. Tiny felt a peculiar proprietorship in his master. . . .

Through the rain Mary staggered to the window. . . . Fondly she put the good-by book

where John would see it, and placed thereupon the dried orange blossoms, then turned despairingly to seek the river. . . .

Within the warm, lighted shop Tiny was broadly awake and sniffing. His master watched him curiously. Tiny jumped down from the desk and trotted to the window. The little dog was all excitement. John got up to see what roused him. The carpenter could just distinguish a retreating figure whose outlines somehow were familiar.

He ran out of the door and overtook her. In the semi-light he saw it was Mary! Mary in a night shift and hatless, Mary distraught and cowering. "It's the end of everything for me, John!" she said in a strange voice. "I'm going where I can find peace!" . . . And would have left him. . . .

But John seized her hands to stop her. He put a protective arm over her rain-soaked shoulder, drawing her into the house. She shuddered. "Don't touch me!" she cried. "I'm branded!" Though she resisted, he brought her in and sat her down in a low chair at the window betwixt the desk and the table. "Now there," said John—



A Paramount Picture.

The Ten Commandments

CORPSE AND WRECKED BOAT—THE SEA TOSSED THEM BOTH
ON A WATERY SAND SPIT.

“You’re not—not branded with anything except FEAR!”

For answer she showed him her hands, pointing to what she told him were white patches of the leprosy. The leper girl from Molokai—Dan’s infatuation—the murder of Sally—the communication of the taint to herself by contact with Dan: the story came forth brokenly out of the distraught brain dominated by the fixed resolve of suicide.

“Mary, there is only one Man who can help you!” said John, gravely.

“He gave his life to free the world from Fear. He is a Man you have forgotten!”

The girl heard his words as if in a haze. Was there by any chance hope? The good chap was turning to the New Testament and finding a chapter from Matthew.

Oh, that! As if the tiresome Book of John and his poor mother’s oft perusal, offered any surcease to-day!

Mary laid her head on her arm wearily. Hope dashed, she must submit to the reading.

“For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” The grave, even tones of John woke a tiny echo of

aspiration, a vague yearning to a Power over and beyond the finite.

“And behold, there came to Him a leper, and worshiped Him.”

Mary saw the rude barn and the Divine wayfarer, there resting. Saw the shaggy-haired peasants, and feminized the poor stricken leper in evil case like her own. 'Twas a girl of golden beauty—all but her hands, which were veiled in long wrist-cloths. Her face was infinitely piteous and appealing.

While the peasants drew back and muttered “Unclean! Unclean!” the girl approached and sank to her knees in front of the Saviour. She bowed her head, and ventured to touch the hem of His garment.

“Lord—if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!”

Lo, Jesus was laying His hands on hers with sweet compassion. His voice (as John read) took on a clarion note—the majestical tones of a divine beneficence that yielded up life itself to save the world.

“I WILL. ARISE, BE THOU MADE CLEAN!”

To Mary's inner ear a heavenly choir seemed singing:

*“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in Thee!
 Let the water and the blood,
 From thy crimson side which flowed,
 Be of sin the double cure,
 Save from wrath and make me pure!
 Nothing in my hands I bring,
 Only to Thy cross I cling.”*

The hymn in her heart lifted her as the girl arose and stood, as it were, transfigured before Jesus. She had torn off her wrist-cloths. Ecstatic, beautiful in her cleanness, she showed the Christ-Man her restored lily-white hands. . . . The vision faded. . . . John stopped and laid down the book.

Mary was standing at the window gazing at her own hands. Suddenly her face was suffused with joy. The day had broken and every object stood out in the distinct light of full dawn.

“Look, John,” cried Mary. “In the light, it’s gone.” Her once scarred hands were void of blemish!

“Yes, Mary,” replied the man who had always loved her, “in the LIGHT—it’s gone!” He smiled with a strange radiance.

She was at his feet—his hand on her head,

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her lovely brown head resting on her arm upon his knee, while her clear eyes, looking off in space, seemed to say that the healing of Jesus cast out fear too with disease and opened a vista of unending happiness. . . .

Let us leave them there in their new-found happiness. For John and Mary knew that the tie that bound them was stronger than all the principalities and powers of evil. Their love was sealed by the Divine mercy. True to the Law of the Ages defied by Dan with such tragic penalty (of which they were soon to know), they were to go down the adventurous ways of life, hand in hand together.

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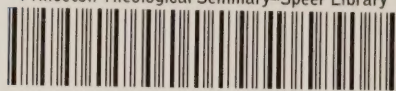




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